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VOL. I

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THE SEVEN SONS
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 1048.

THE SEVEN SONS OF MAMMON BY G. A. SALA.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

THE SEVEN

COLLECTION

OF

BRITISH AUTHORS

THE SEVEN

VOL. 1048

THE SEVEN SONS OF MAMMON BY G. A. SMITH

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

THE SEVEN SONS

OF

MAMMON:

A STORY.

BY

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1869.

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BY

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA

CONTRACTED EDITION

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL I

LIST I

BRONZE TAVCHNIT

1800

The Right of Property in

PREFACE.

A BOOK without a Preface has, ere now, been likened to a Palace without a façade; but I am afraid that in too many instances the prefatory observations which authors think themselves called upon to make, more closely resemble that cumbrous attic story added, by an after thought, to the Mansion House, and which enabled the architect to spoil an originally excellent edifice. As, however, the postulate of excellence as regards this work may be extremely questionable, I do not think that a brief exordium is calculated to make it much better or much worse. The only tribulation it has caused me, has been in the endeavour to make it serve some useful purpose. For, by this time, I should imagine those who peruse novels must have grown somewhat tired of being called "courteous readers"—of being grinned and simpered at, and tickled, and flattered, and cajoled by a person they never saw, and whom most probably they do not care to see. How do I know that the reader of these lines is "courteous"? He may be Ursa Major for aught I can tell, and be grumbling and growling fiercely because the tale does not finish to his liking. Why should I endeavour to conciliate some unknown reader,

whose favour can do me no good, and whose displeasure no harm? If the public don't approve of the show, they need not patronise it. There are other ways, thank Goodness, of getting a livelihood, besides dabbling in literature. There are shoes to mend and stones to crack; and, bearing this in mind, I can afford to dispense with the deprecatory or complimentary preface, and to brand it as useless and absurd.

I have something, however, to say; and it could not be said in a better place than this. The title of "The Seven Sons of Mammon" may be regarded by some persons as a misnomer, and others may assume that I have failed in carrying out the plan I originally proposed to myself. I beg to state, that, in commencing the first chapter, I knew perfectly well what the last one was to be about; and that I no more contemplated giving a distinct biography of each Son of Mammon than of dancing on the tight rope and cooking an *omelette in medio*. You see that, had each of the Seven Sons an equal space apportioned to him, this work had need to be in six volumes instead of two; and I am afraid that the modern reading public is not inclined to tolerate works of the dimensions of the "Grand Cyrus," or even of "Clarissa Harlowe." Whether there is to be a sequel to what I have already given—whether any more of Mammon or his Sons is to be heard at a future period, must depend on the inclination of the public. If they cry "Hold—enough!" I shall stay my hand; if they are anxious for additional

particulars, they shall have them. *C'est à prendre ou à laisser.* I have designed my little Human Comedy on the model of an American *table d'hôte*, and the guests may drop in as they choose, eat their fill, go away, or come back again as the humour takes them. How many incarnations, if you please, had Balzac's Vautrin? How many times, and in how many novels, does Mr. Cooper's Natty Bumppo turn up; and who would ever grow tired of the Marquis of Steyne, were he met with twenty times in Mr. Thackeray's fictions? You may object that *my* characters are dull and stupid and uninteresting. That is, again, a matter of opinion.

With respect to the reception this novel may meet with from professional critics, I am indifferent. Of course, for my Publisher's sake, I should wish it to be lauded to the skies; but so far as I am personally concerned, criticism, hostile or amicable, is a matter of no moment whatsoever. Did I earn my bread by writing novels, or did I look to booksellers for patronage, the praise or the condemnation of a new work might make or break me;—were I young, or hopeful, or ambitious, I might be overjoyed or driven to despair by eulogy or blame. But I have reviewed too many books in my time, and known too many reviewers, to care much about such things. I have found that slander has not diminished my income, and that the lies that have been told about me have not injured my digestion; and although it is a very nice thing to be a popular author, and a very terrible one to be castigated as a dullard and an ignoramus by critics, I have come

to be of the opinion of *Candide* "*qu'il faut cultiver son jardin*," and that, so long as a man goes on cultivating his cabbages in a quiet laborious manner, and earning his daily bread by the sweat of his brow, and thanking God for it, he need not trouble himself in any great degree about the applause or censure of the world. Therefore, my intimate enemies, or my inimical friends, if you feel inclined for the attack, come on. Gentlemen of the Guard, fire first. I have, myself, a faculty for sound hearty abuse, and if you choose to brawl at me over the hedge, I shall be very happy to look up from my spade-husbandry, and return half a dozen good set terms of invective for every six you may be pleased to favour me with.

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.

UPTON COURT, BUCKS,
December, 1861.

THE SEVEN SONS OF MARRION

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THE SEVEN SONS OF MAMMON.

CHAPTER I.

What came out of a Court in the City.

"GOLD is a chimera," I heard a man sing in the opera of "Robert le Diable." *L'or est une chimère.* Gold a chimera! Is it? Ask Sir Jasper Goldthorpe.

He was the richest man on 'Change. The richest man in the Bank Parlour. The richest man in the East India Directory. The richest man at innumerable Boards, whose members sat and coined money out of green baize. He was the richest man in that Square full of palaces, near to where stood an ugly monument that poor rogues used to be suspended from, hard by the Edgeware Road. He was the richest man in the county where he had his estate and his "place," and of which he was High Sheriff. When he went down for a week to Brighton, his riches awed the wealthiest stockbrokers and the grandest members of the fast-decreasing class of nabobs. And Rothschilds and Baring? and the Amsterdam Hopes? and the Hamburg Heines? Pshaw! Pshaw! Sir Jasper Goldthorpe was deemed to be richer than all these, for he was alone on his throne of gold. He had no partners. Mammon would not even let one of his sons come into the firm. No shares were to be purchased

in the house of Goldthorpe and Co. The Co. was a myth. Sir Jasper was the Co.—himself and company. He had no fears that the Antwerp house would warn him against undue speculations; that the Leghorn branch would remonstrate if he drew too largely on them, or the Frankfort firm give cause for remonstrance by drawing too heavily on him. He stood alone. His agents and correspondents were his obedient and trembling slaves, and he the most generous but the most exacting of taskmasters. There was no trifling with Sir Jasper Goldthorpe. How could one jest with a man who had so much money? He had had rivals. Now and then some gorged Hebrew capitalist of Paris or Madrid would strive to shoulder his way past him with bank-notes and bonds; but Sir Jasper Goldthorpe, with icy English politeness, would drop a couple of heavy golden ingots on the capitalist's toes, and force him to retreat, howling and discomfited. Once or twice some lucky speculator in Australian wool, some enriched digger, some auriferous bubble-monger of railway shares and mining-schemes, would make a dead set at Sir Jasper's supremacy,—would strive to outvie him by taking a bigger house, giving grander parties, purchasing more acres of park-land, subscribing to more charities and packs of hounds. Then Sir Jasper would smile his frigid smile, step down to a little shooting-box, if it were in autumn, or to the sea-side if in spring; pop away at the pheasants, or stroll about in a jacket and a slouched hat, as though he were some miserable wretch of eight hundred pounds a year; and then, coming quietly back to town, would manage somehow to crush his rivals. He always crushed them. The Australian wool-speculator would spend some

thousands in a contested election—lose it; or, gaining it, be unseated for bribery, and be forced to retrench. The digger's agents would fail, or he drink himself into a cerebral congestion. The bubble-monger would burst and turn out a common cheat. Alone, triumphant and immovable, without a wrinkle in his brow or a crease in his waistcoat, would stand Sir Jasper Goldthorpe. At last people gave up contending with him, and were content to agree that he was a wonderful man.

His beginnings had been small enough. It was rumoured that his father was but a small tradesman in a country town. There were found even those bold enough to whisper, "Bankrupt in 'twenty-five; didn't pay twopence in the pound,"—alluding to the paternal Goldthorpe. Sir Jasper always spoke of his sire as "my excellent and worthy father;" and you may be sure that no word of detraction against his progenitor was ever audible in his presence, or within a good distance thereof. He had himself first made an appearance in public with a company which certainly did not succeed after he left it, but which realised tremendous profits while he was on the direction. He had gone largely into government contracts, and had been the special object of several commissions of inquiry; but it always turned out that it was somebody else, and not he, who was to be blamed for shoes that wouldn't go on, and muskets that wouldn't go off; and commissioners, witnesses, and accountants were all loud in their praises of Mr. Goldthorpe's—he was Mr. Goldthorpe then—public spirit and unimpeachable integrity. He had always been a prosperous man, with that wondrous Midas faculty for turning everything which he touched into gold; but the termination

of a particularly searching committee, which had been moved for in a series of vehement speeches by two Radical members, and had very nearly been the means of ejecting the Government of the day from office, seemed the turning-point in his greater fortune. How the man's riches swelled and swelled after his contract rum had been denounced as a fiery poison, and his contract rice sneered at as the sweepings of the dock-warehouses! He thenceforward devoted himself to politics: one of the Radical members was regularly coughed down for several sessions, and the other, at the next general election, lost his seat, and, more than suspected of debt, was compelled to fly to Brussels in Brabant. Mr. Hemp of the Sheriff's Court makes proclamation of outlawry against him with admirable regularity. After this, naturally Mr. Goldthorpe gave up contracts altogether. It was about this time that he made such immense sums in the shipping line of business. He had a fleet which sailed to the East Indies, and a fleet which sailed to the West; and his Australian bullion dealings and speculations in wool, copper, and tallow were prodigious. With great meekness and condescension he consented to serve the office of Sheriff in the metropolis. He might have been Alderman and Lord Mayor, of course, had he so chosen; but these latter dignities he declined. He got into Parliament; his constituents, touched with gratitude and reverence, it is to be supposed, for the immense wealth he possessed, insisting on paying his election expenses to the uttermost farthing. When he was supposed to be worth about a million of money, a committee of merchants and bankers met at the London Tavern, and boldly put down their hundreds

and their fifties for a testimonial, which—a *chef-d'œuvre* of the ateliers of Mr. Benson of Cornhill, and forming a pleasing pyramidal composition in burnished and frosted gold, including dolphins, the Three Graces, emblematic figures of Peace and Commerce, a nautilus-shell, an Egyptian pyramid, and an Arab steed—the malicious described it as three race-cups hammered into one—was presented to him at a grand banquet held at the “Albion,” Aldersgate Street. He was master of the Mystery of Battleaxe-makers, and gracefully presided over the patronage in the gift of that wealthy company, in the shape of fat livings in the Church and presentations to the Company’s schools. He was great at Goldsmiths’ Hall; for if he didn’t make actual plate and jewellery, he made the raw material, gold, by heaps:—which is far better. Soon after he entered Parliament he was made a Baronet;—’twas the least tribute that could be paid to his transcendent merits and riches. He was received with immense respect in the House of Commons, and his opinions on financial questions, although he scarcely ever spoke, were looked upon as incontrovertible. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was generally thought to be sure of another six months’ tenure of office if he could only be seen walking with Sir Jasper Goldthorpe on the river-terrace. He was usually lucky enough to get excused from committees; it was known how rich a man he was, and how much he had to do. Had he not been so useful to the Government, there is little doubt that, ere this history opens, he would have been made a Peer.

The year 1847, and the succeeding year of revolution and political turmoils, shook, as you will remember,

the commerce of the Continent to its very centre, and some shocks of the universal earthquake were felt even in the sound and stable city of London. Many brave and ancient firms utterly vanished. It was then, so the gossips said, that Sir Jasper Goldthorpe made his famous *coup* of purchasing, at about a third of their value, the diamonds and other regalia of the distressed and fugitive sovereigns of Europe. When confidence was restored, and the reign of legitimacy recommenced diamonds were at a premium again, and Sir Jasper Goldthorpe realised. He had done with all his mercantile speculations now,—had no longer large ventures on the sea, or trains of obsequious shipping and colonial brokers at his heels. He dealt in Money, and money alone. He turned money over, and in the summersault it made itself into more money. He crumpled a piece of paper, and it distilled drops of gold into his coffers. The more bankrupt was a European state, or a South-American republic, the richer became Sir Jasper Goldthorpe. He purchased railways, but he did not carry them out. He farmed mines and revenues, but he neither worked nor collected them. They remained with him but a few days; but every thing of which he took hold was a golden orange, and he managed to squeeze it so long as he held it.

In the year 1849, Sir Jasper Goldthorpe was just fifty years of age. As Christmas came round, he was good enough to remember, on returning thanks for the proposal of his health at a grand feast at Battleaxe-makers' Hall, that he was born on the twenty-seventh of December, Anno Domini seventeen hundred and ninety-nine. He said "Anno Domini;" for though

his words were few, they were always sonorous, and had a rich metallic sound. His admirers declared that they were worth their weight in gold. The cheers at the announcement of the date of his nativity were deafening. About Christmas time 1849, then, Sir Jasper Goldthorpe, Bart., M.P., F.R.S. (he had contributed a wonderful paper on the Greek drachma to the transactions of the Royal Society, and was dignified moreover with many more initials than I care to enumerate), was a hale fresh-coloured gentleman, slightly corpulent, and with a very slight stoop, in his shoulders, but looking on the whole a model of health and strength. He was not in the least bald,—so rich a man could not afford to lose even a hair,—and his locks, thin as they were, were not even gray, but of a dull flaxen colour. “Tow head” Sir Jasper had been opprobriously nick-named by political opponents at election time. He was quite cleanly shaven and very fresh-coloured. His eyes were blue-gray, and mirrors of placidity—that is, when you could get him to look at you; for Sir Jasper was shortsighted. He read with a double eye-glass, and when he was not reading usually bent his eyes downwards. He was a tall man, and wore a white hat in winter. His hands were very fat, smooth, and dimpled, his fingers very short and thick at the tips. Much handling of money had blunted them, perhaps. A black frock-coat, gray trousers, the invariable buff waistcoat already mentioned, the double eye-glass, a plain black necktie, a very high shirt-collar, of the old tape-tied kind, not buttoned; no rings or trinkets of any kind. Imagine the form I have described so attired, and you will have a definite notion of Sir Jasper Goldthorpe. He came down to the

Office every morning with unvarying punctuality (save during the vacations he methodically allowed himself) at ten o'clock. He always came down in his carriage—a double-bodied, high-hung, two-hundred-guinea-pair-of-horses one. He would as soon have thought of riding in a brougham at the east end as of paying nineteen shillings in the pound. At his villas and palaces he had plenty of broughams, and phaetons, and curricles, and things; and in the country he did not disdain to ride on a shaggy little pony, or to drive a tiny wicker-work carriage, like a clothes-basket upon wheels; but between Temple Bar and Eastcheap the carriage was part of his state and the handmaiden to his riches. But, though he would not ride eastward in a brougham, it was touching to mark the humility with which this very rich man would hire a common, lowly, four-wheeled cab for conveyance to public meetings or railway stations. Those who knew how rich he was said he looked ten times richer, meekly sitting on the shabby cushions of the four-wheeler, with his bundle of papers—contracts for the new loan perhaps—or his little locked travelling bag beside him. He was fond, too, of walking; and, with his umbrella in one hand and his buckskin gloves (which he never wore) in the other, might often be seen peacefully strolling towards the Royal Exchange, the Bank, or the India House, quite unmoved, apparently, by the rush and turmoil of the Poultry, Cornhill, or Leadenhall Street. He was never in a hurry; you might see him serenely gazing in at the windows of the bullion-dealers and jewellers, or blandly contemplating the fire-proof safes and cash-boxes at Chubb's, as though time was no object to him; although you knew that hundreds of people were

at that moment anxiously waiting to see him, and hungering for one of his golden smiles. What need had he to be in a hurry? He knew that he, being so rich, would be waited for; and yet Sir Jasper Goldthorpe was proverbial for punctuality, and in most cases, where any matters of business were concerned, contrived to be a little beforehand with those he had transactions with.

Who knows Beryl Court? It lies between Temple Bar and Eastcheap, as aforesaid. Need I be more explicit? Well, it is not a hundred yards from St. Mary Axe. I daren't say more, for fear of compromising people. The street from which Beryl Court leads is very narrow, and very poor, and very dirty; and although it is the centre of a hive of wealth and industry, of lordly counting-houses, board-rooms, and wholesale groceries, is given up to the meanest description of commerce. Petty little hucksters' and chandlers' shops nestle under the wing of the merchant princes, iron safes, crammed with gold and notes. One side of the street may, however, for all its dirt and squalor, be secretly wealthy; for it is almost exclusively occupied by the unwindowed shops of Jewdealers in oranges, grapes, and almonds, the which spread a very pleasant odour in Beryl Court. It would be pleasanter, perhaps, were it not mingled with the smell of fried fish and strongly-pickled vegetables, retailed in the few little stalls forming the exception to the rule of fruit-selling. The Caucasian proprietors of these establishments are dirty and wretched-looking from Sunday to Friday night; but on Saturdays they are splendid in brave garments and rich gems. They all had the most intense respect for Sir Jasper Goldthorpe and Sir Jasper Goldthorpe's

carriage; and their little black-eyed chaffering children sometimes penetrated into Beryl Court, and peered admiringly at the Palace of Gold erected there.

For it was a palace; a marble-fronted house, with wings forming three parts of a square; the fourth a red brick wall, with a porter's lodge in one corner. The court itself beautifully flagged with gray and white stone in chequers; and in the centre a pretty fountain, where a little boy with nothing on him spouted water from a conch-shell all day long. The stream seemed to be murmuring odes in praise of riches. The windows were all plate-glass, the wire-gauze blinds had golden beadings; over the door was sculptured the Goldthorpe family cognizance,—three martlets on a field *or*; the bloody hand of its proper blazon; motto, *Ex sudore, aurum*, the whole emblazoned on a richly-framed marble escutcheon. On the well-polished mahogany door glittered the brass-plate of the firm "Goldthorpe and Co."—a plate burnished much brighter than gold. The architecture of Beryl Court, exteriorly, was entirely Italian Renaissance, and had been commanded by Sir Jasper,—in a letter of four lines to his architect,—just after he achieved his baronetcy. But his decorative fancy was an odd one; for, inside, the house was at least a hundred and fifty years old. Some South-Sea director had lived here in the reign of George I.; and there was a vast staircase painted with the story of the Golden Fleece, and a pagan apotheosis sprawled on the ceiling of almost every room. The staircase, up which you might have driven a coach-and-four, was of polished oak, with richly carved balustrades, and its stairs were laid with an oil-cloth painted in imitation of tiger's skin. All the rooms were panelled, with

enriched marble mantelpieces and curiously inlaid floors; but all this work was of the old time of the South-Sea director. No gas was permitted in Beryl Court. The numerous staff of clerks worked in winter time by the light of dumpy wax candles. The balance of the petty cash account exceeded the salary of a county court judge. The heads of departments had Turkey carpets laid in their rooms, rosewood escritaires to write upon, morocco-covered easy-chairs to sit upon. Silent and civil messengers glided in and out on their behests. Lunch was brought to them when they asked. Were those repasts charged in the petty cash, I wonder? Broughams came for many of the superior clerks when office hours were over. Perhaps it was for that reason that Sir Jasper Goldthorpe repudiated, while in the City, the vehicles just spoken of. Everybody employed by the firm, from the heads of departments to the youngest office-boy, was paid so highly that embezzlement was unheard of. A young man's fortune was thought to be made if he could only be got into Goldthorpe's house, although there was not the remotest chance of his ever obtaining a partnership therein; and parents and guardians used to intrigue for years to obtain junior clerkships for their sons and wards, just as they would intrigue for Indian cadetships or commissions in the Guards.

What did all these chiefs of departments, clerks, messengers, and office-boys do from nine in the morning until five at night? None but those employed by the firm could tell. They wrote, wrote, and wrote: took letters off files and put them on others; consulted huge vellum-covered volumes, and made entries in other tomes similarly bound, perpetually; but what they did

was a mystery. There was no faint odour about, of samples of rice, indigo, coffee, sugar, opium, as in merchants' and brokers' offices. No sea-captains showed their bronzed faces in the counting-house. No actual cash was ever seen: but nobody had the least doubt that the one great subject of work at Goldthorpe's was Money. All day long a stream of junior clerks with pocket-books secured by leather-covered chains wound round their waists would drop Bills for Acceptance into the great letter-box by the brass-plate in Beryl Court; and all day long a counter-stream of Goldthorpeian messengers would issue from Beryl Court, and from their leather chain-secured pocket-books drop Bills for Acceptance in other letter-boxes all over the City.

Sir Jasper's room was the plainest in the entire establishment. It was papered a sober drab, and matted; but it was a very Ear of Dionysius for gutta-percha tubing and ivory mouth-pieces. Nearly one side of the room was taken up by a huge iron safe, which, with its many locks and knobs and handles, looked like a monument to Mammon.

Add to Beryl Court the palace in Onyx Square, with its picture-gallery, its grand ball-room, and its belvedere towering above the neighbouring mansions, sumptuous and superb. Add to these the princely domain of Goldthorpe in Surrey, with its deer-park and its home-park, its Vitruvian palazzo; its conservatories, graperies, pineries, kennels, model-dairies, lawns, terraces, mazes, grottoes, and temples:—its stables and coach-houses, its pavilions and lodges. Add to these a fine house at Kemp Town, Brighton, and the little shooting-box I have already glanced at. Surely it needs no more to convince you that Sir Jasper Gold-

thorpe was a power in the state and a prince in the land.

So gold is a chimera, is it? Ah, my romantic friends, you little know what a reality gold is. See what it had given this fortunate man. Power and influence, respect, adulation, worship almost. Houses and parks and palaces, carriages and horses and hounds: a red hand in his escutcheon, a handle to his name, a seat in the Parliament of the country, a peerage in prospect;—and Gold, nothing but gold, had done it all.

CHAPTER II.

The Twenty-seventh of December.

“AND if ever,” exclaimed Lady Goldthorpe, puffing with over-exertion,—“if ever I try to get a Christmas-tree into a clarence again, I’m a Dutchman,—that’s to say, a Dutchwoman,—that’s all.”

Lady Goldthorpe was stout in figure and mature in years, and might be excused for puffing. Moreover, although it was a very cold winter’s day, Lady Goldthorpe had on a very thick dress of black velvet, beneath which was revealed an underskirt of quilted silk; and a long seal-skin mantle trailed from her broad shoulders, and a crimson silk scarf was tied round her comfortable chin, and purple plush gloves defended her hands, and goloshes covered her feet, and a bonnet of velvet and lace sat closely to her round jovial-looking face; and there were plenty of rugs and shawls and mufflers about her in the carriage where she sat, and a muff of rich fur bolstered her up on one side, and a very fat shaggy Skye terrier on the other. The very gold chain she wore round her neck was heavy enough

to make her warm; and as Lady Goldthorpe's clarence—she had taken out the clarence that day—was cosily lined and padded and cushioned, and had elastic stuffed cushions and a fleecy rug at the bottom, it would not, I think, have been a thing to be wondered at if Lady Goldthorpe had puffed even without excessive exertion.

But there was that Christmas-tree into the bargain. Now you may get almost anything—some people say everything—into a carpet-bag; but I much doubt whether, under any circumstances, a Christmas-tree can be comfortably stowed away in the carriage called a clarence. It isn't within the laws of nature or the fitness of things. A flower-pot is bad enough; a vivarium can with difficulty be conveyed in a hackney-coach; but a Christmas-tree, never! Not that this adjunct, which we have borrowed from the German Vaterland to make our Christmas festivals merrier, was of the largest size. 'Twas but a poor little sapling evergreen, a supplementary tree, designed to act as satellite to the monarchs of the forest in Lady Goldthorpe's saloons. Her ladyship always had half a dozen trees at Christmas. But one had caught fire from the premature illumination by infantine hands of the waxen tapers among its branches the night before, and had not only been consumed to its roots, but had very near burned the belvedered palace in Onyx Square along with it. The twenty-seventh of December was the day on which it was Lady Goldthorpe's immemorial custom to have all her trees in full bloom. It was essential to repair at once the loss of the burnt-up *arbuste*; and so Lady Goldthorpe had ordered the clarence, and driven down to Fortnum and Mason's to buy an additional tree, ready-hung with toys, and fit to be lighted up instanter.

The tree was duly purchased—that was a very easy matter; but the difficulty was to get it into the carriage, for Lady Goldthorpe was an impulsive lady and a determined one; and when she could have her own way—which she generally had—liked to have it. She had said she would carry home the tree with her, and, notwithstanding the apparently insurmountable impediments to the accomplishment of her design, she insisted upon its being carried out. First her embroidered, buttoned, and striped footpage tried, but lamentably failed in the attempt; and, under the humiliating threat of having his ears boxed—a menace rendered still more galling by its being proffered in the presence of a momentarily increasing circle of street-boys, who looked at the whole affair with the liveliest interest—he retired to the coach-box and snivelled; whereupon he was called by the coachman, in a wheezy undertone, a “young warmint.” The domestic who drove Lady Goldthorpe’s clarence was so fat, so warmly clad and wrapped up, and had so broad and jovial a countenance, that he might have passed for a poor relation of her ladyship’s, whom the inexorable logic of necessity compelled to hold the reins, but who, off the box, was a Goldthorpe and a brother.

One of Messrs. Fortnum and Mason’s young gentlemen—I dare not term them young men—having likewise done his best, and been stigmatised as an idiot for his pains, at which he blushed, smiled, rubbed his hands—as was seemly in the presence of a lady-customer who ran such heavy bills, and, what is more, paid them with unvarying regularity—Lady Goldthorpe took the refractory tree (which wasn’t more than a foot and a half high) in hand herself. But the tree was as obstinate

as her ladyship. It wouldn't stand up, or lie down, or lean against the side of the carriage. It would protrude its branches either from one window or the other. Once it fell a-top of the fat terrier, irritating with its twigs that animal's nose, and causing him to yelp piteously; and at last Lady Goldthorpe's unsuccessful struggles with the mutinous fragment of vegetation gave rise to the exclamation recorded at the commencement of this chapter.

"Drat the tree!" the lady cried out, in increasing exasperation. "There's two drums off, and a banjo, and a flying Cupid, and a sugarstuff parrot. *Now* will you, then, obstinate?"

She gave a vigorous pull and a wrench at the recalcitrant tree. The last appeal seemed to have touched its obdurate heart, and by dint of more coaxing and a little propping up with the muff and a couple of shawls, it gradually consented to assume an erect and stationary position.

"Home!" cried Lady Goldthorpe to the page, who jumped down as Messrs. Fortnum and Mason's young gentleman telegraphed to him that peace was restored. The little street-boys gave a cheer,—why they scarcely knew, only, as a reflective young butcher observed, "the old un," meaning her ladyship, looked "such a jolly party;" the young gentleman who had been called an idiot retired into the emporium of Christmas and colonial luxuries to which he was attached, and indulged in comments with his comrades on Lady Goldthorpe's hasty temper, and on the munificent Christmas boxes she always distributed; and away drove the clarence, with its two showy horses, in the direction of Park Lane, the toy-laden branches of the Christmas-

tree bobbing round Lady Goldthorpe's jovial face, until she looked like a fat Fair Rosamond in an ambulatory bower.

"Thank goodness for all things!" said the wife of the Prince of Beryl Court. There couldn't be two Lady Goldthorpes, you know,—the scheme of the universe couldn't stand it. "Thank goodness!" her ladyship repeated, when she had recovered her breath, and her usual equanimity of temper, "one of my troubles is over. Not that I've any thanks to give you, Magdalen Hill," she continued, "sitting quiet and cool there like a stuck pig, and me breaking my heart over the thing, and the mother of Seven Children, all boys too."

Yes; Lady Goldthorpe had the number of children she alluded to: and there were Seven Sons to the Mammon of Beryl Court.

"I can't see, mamma," answered a calm quiet voice on the other side of her ladyship, "that seven children have anything to do with your trouble. Was the Christmas-tree an eighth one?"

"Then why didn't you help me, Miss Icicle?"

"I knew I couldn't be of any use. You know how weak and awkward I am. And besides, I thought that you would desist, and allow the people at the shop to do that which they should have done in the first instance:—send the thing home."

"Ah, I dare say," grumbled, but not ill-humouredly, the mother of seven children. "It's always the same:—weak and awkward. You're not weak and awkward when you're playing the harp or the pianoforte like an angel, or painting saints with gold cheese-plates round their heads, and their toes turned in:—poor deluded creeturs. You're not weak and awkward when you're

writing letters five pages long, let alone the crossing, to somebody in India, are you?"

A faint blush rose on the pale face, and a fainter smile played on the firm lips of Lady Goldthorpe's companion.

What companion? Muffs don't blush, at least not inanimate ones; and Skye terriers, although they sometimes grin and snarl, seldom smile. Who was Lady Goldthorpe's companion, occupying, indeed, the remaining back seat of the carriage, the dog sitting in conscious majesty between?

Why, Magdalen Hill, to be sure. And who was Magdalen Hill? A very few words will suffice to introduce her to you. She was very tall, and very slender, and had an odd prejudice against wearing crinoline, which, if you will carry your remembrance back, began to show itself in England as a French importation about ten years ago.* She had very large gray eyes, veiled with very long lashes, and which had a fixed and stern and not very pleasant expression. Her lips were, as I have hinted, firmly cut—"chiselled" is I believe the proper term—and when she opened them, very bitter words issued occasionally from between them and her white teeth. Her feet—what do I know about a lady's feet? and what gross dullards are those, who, looking on Woman, cast down their eyes to the earth she walks upon, instead of looking upward to the heaven in her face! Well, her feet. They were hidden,

* Lest the author should be accused of an anachronism, he begs to refer his readers to a comic publication called the *Man in the Moon*, which may be consulted in the reading-room of the British Museum, and in Volume II. (under the date of 1847) of which work he will find this paragraph: "All the cab-horses in Paris are said to have lost their tails in consequence of the demand for crinoline."

as a lady's feet should almost ever be; and she never danced, and he who describes her never met her on a wet day. She had very long white hands, and I can assure you that her fingers were not tapering; for, albeit their hue was exquisite, long practice on the pianoforte, on which she was an accomplished performer, had given somewhat of a muscular character to her digits, and to the nerves and muscles that belonged to them. Her hair—yes, her hair, how well that is remembered!—was raven black, was glossy, worn in two plain *bandeaux*. I spoke of her pale face. It was pale almost to the pallor of Death. You know the pallor I mean—the first camellia-like waxiness of the mortal that has put on immortality, not the dreadful hues of after days.

Such was Magdalen Hill. She dressed habitually in that which Chief Justice Hale advised his children to dress in, “sad colour”—grays and fawns, and lilacs and blacks, relieved by lighter rays. She wore high-necked dresses always; and for all ornament carried a plain cross of dead gold at her throat. And she seemed one of those women who look neither happy nor unhappy, despairing nor resigned, quick nor slow, clever nor stupid; but who are ready and able for anything—to run away with you, or to go into a convent and wear spiked girdles, and scourge themselves thrice a day; to be the idol of a Parisian *salon*, or to teach a Sunday-school full of clod-hopping children; to say spontaneously “I love you,” or to a fervent protestation of love to answer, “Sir, I don’t understand you;” to go to the end of the world for an idea, or to go home to their mothers, to bear blows, ill usage, coarse language,—anything but infidelity; or to take offence

at the omission of a finger-napkin at dinner, and serve you with a citation in the Divorce Court for cruelty because you have taken them to the Opera in a cab instead of a brougham. Who has not known these fathomless, inscrutable women; looked upon those eyes, whose glance would either beam out a message of happiness to you, or turning towards the executioner send you to the block, and yet do neither; but behave always in conformity with *les parfaites convenances*! Such was Magdalen Hill, with her eyes, and her lips, and her long demure but cruel hands, and her set phrases, and her sarcastic parentheses, and the great mystery of Heart and Soul within her, which would have baffled you, La Bruyère, in all your skill in character, and you, John Wilkes, with all your boast of subduing the untractable fair. And of such there are thousands, who are born to be riddles and paradoxes, and the despair of passionate men.

Magdalen Hill was an orphan. Her father had been a colonial judge, and had died of the yellow fever just at the time when he had laid by enough money to give a dowry to his little daughter, then at boarding-school, a mere child, in England. Magdalen was not a favourite at school. She never played, never got into disgrace, never did anything that her governesses had to forgive her for, and love her more for the atonement of her fault. She was always calm, equable,—not silent, but incomprehensible.

“Upon my word,” said, in despair, Miss Mirabelle, the duenna of Selina House, Brixton, “if Miss Hill had not had sixty thousand pounds to her fortune, I do believe that the best thing that could have happened to her would have been to be an articulated pupil, and

turn out a 'trotting governess;' " by which appellation was meant, I believe, those unhappy females who, collected and resigned, go out daily in rain, or sleet or snow, to give lessons in middle-class families, and are spoken of by the servant who opens the door as "that young pusson who comes at twelve, and will *not* wipe her feet." Poor wearied creature, with an English lady's soul within you, how much mud have you carried away from rich men's houses, when you should have shaken off the dust of your feet on the scraper!

But Magdalen Hill had sixty thousand pounds to her fortune. She was a rich little girl and a rich young woman. Sir Jasper Goldthorpe had been her guardian. Her holidays had been spent in his family. After she came of age,—for she was now twenty-two,—his house became her home. And, as we have seen, she called good old Lady Goldthorpe her "mamma."

I come back to the blush and the smile—both faint—awakened by the good-natured taunt that she was neither weak nor awkward when she wrote those voluminous epistles to "somebody in India."

"You know that he is coming home, mamma," she said, laying her hand on her companion's arm, and in a voice that would have been soft and kindly, had there not been, as in an old harpsichord, a string broken somewhere.

"Yes, my darling Maggie, my own good girl," the wife of the British baronet responded, "I know it well. He has promised, he has tried; he will, I'm sure, if human will can prevail. He knows that the twenty-seventh of December is his father's birthday. He knows that he is my own dear son, which I bore him in travail and in sorrow twenty-seven years ago, when

we were poor, Magdalen Hill—when we were poor, when my Goldy wasn't the great man he is now; when Goldy walked ten miles over the snow to fetch a doctor, and the good gentleman said that I bore up more bravely than mortal woman ever did, and—Heaven bless him for it—left half a sovereign on the mantle-piece of his own gentleman's money, and hid the guinea fee my husband had scraped together sixpence by sixpence, at the very back of the Bible on the chest of drawers. I know that my son will come home from the far East Indies. I know he will. He has timed his time; and if wind and weather don't stop him, he'll be here to-night. He was born in '23. He got his cadetship in '40. and Goldy thought it a good catch; although I'm sure, situated as he now is, he'd make my youngest boy Emperor of Rooshia. My son Hugh will be back to-night, and you know what he's coming for. He's a captain in the army. He's coming back, not alone to see his father and mother and brothers, but he's coming home to marry you, Magdalen Hill, which he fell in love with you five years back, when he was home on leave; and I know, for all your face that frightens me, that you love him, and that he loves you; and though I am but a poor woman which was ill brought up, and wasn't always so, I love my son and daughter which is to be, and I've had seven children, all boys."

It was a very indecorous thing to do at Grosvenor Gate, Park Lane; but it is none the less true that Lady Goldthorpe, the mother of seven children, all boys, and the wife of the richest man in the City of London, did, there and then, and within the very shadow of Grosvenor Gate, and in her own clarence, throw her

arms about the neck of her companion, and vehemently kiss her. Who let her kiss, and returned the embrace.

"I'm sure," the good lady remarked, affectionately smoothing the dark bands of Magdalen Hill, which had become slightly disarranged, "that we've all got our troubles, even to the richest of us. It was years, my dear, before I could receive company without trembling all over, or give an evening party without wishing that I might sink through the drawing-room carpet. When I married my Goldy, I hadn't an *h* in my alphabet,"—in making this confession Lady Goldthorpe very nearly succeeded in putting an *h* to the alphabet she mentioned,—“and now every thing's prospered with us. I'm sure that the very potato peelings seemed to turn to gold in Goldy's hands; and you're going to marry Hugh, and I'm the happy mother of seven children.”

Yes; the Goldthorpe quiver was furnished with that number of arrows. Let us mark off, one by one, the Seven Sons of Mammon.

First came Hugh Jasper Goldthorpe. His first name from a godfather, Mr. Hugh Desborough, who during Sir Jasper's early career had been intimately connected with him in friendship and in business. Hugh was twenty-six years of age. He was but a captain in a regiment of native infantry in the service of the East India Company; but he had held important staff appointments, had been resident and political agent at the court of more than one native prince, and had obtained great renown during the last campaign against the Sikhs as the commander of that famous corps of indigenous troopers, the Daglishwallah Irregular Cavalry.

Second came Ernest, born in the year 'twenty four, and consequently that number of years old at the commencement of this history. Ernest had early manifested a serious and studious disposition; had passed with great distinction through Rugby school; gained high honours at Cambridge; took holy orders; and had been recently inducted into the rectory of Swordsley, worth a good nine hundred per annum, one of the comfortable benefices in the gift of the Battleaxemakers' Company.

The third son, William, who was now twenty-three, had chosen, like his eldest brother, the army for his profession; but the times being very different with his papa to those in which he had been glad to obtain a humble cadetship for his first-born, a commission in a crack cavalry regiment had been purchased for him, and he was now a lieutenant in the 19th Hussars.

The fourth Son of Mammon, Henry, was at sea. He had entered a line-of-battle ship as naval cadet, and having served his time as midshipman, and passed his examination with much *éclat*, was now a mate, awaiting his lieutenant's commission on board the *Magnanimous*, ninety-one gun ship, at Malta.

George, the fifth son, aged nineteen, was an undergraduate at Oxford, and was destined for the bar; his mother having the firmest persuasion that Sir Jasper Goldthorpe had only to say the word to have her George made Lord-Chancellor the moment after he had donned his wig and gown.

Charles, the sixth son, was scarcely eighteen, but he was already installed in a clerkship in the Foreign Office; and Sir Jasper's great friend, the Earl of Mount Olympus, had promised Charles the very first foreign

attachéship—at a nice court where there was plenty of good society and a healthy climate—that should become available.

Alfred, the seventh son, and who at Christmas 1849 was nearly eleven years of age, was a boy at school at Eton, where he had much more pocket-money, and had very nearly as much respect paid to him as though he had been a little Duke. Having a taste for history and a turn for recitation, his career was destined to be “politics,” by which Lady Goldthorpe understood that her youngest son was to be made Prime Minister of England so soon as he arrived at years of discretion.

At the grand Christmas party given in Onyx Square on the twenty-seventh of December, in honour of the double event,—the joyful season and the birthday of Sir Jasper Goldthorpe,—five of the Seven Sons of Mammon were present. The Reverend Ernest Goldthorpe, who was pale and demure, and wore a high black silk waistcoat that met his bow-less white neckcloth, came and talked church decoration and illuminated literature with Magdalen Hill. Lieutenant William, of the 19th Hussars, danced and flirted and supped copiously, and was admired—chiefly for his moustaches and his impertinence—by all the young ladies present, and was positively idolised by the said young ladies’ mammas. George, the fifth arrow in the auriferous quiver, was there from Oxford. Charles, the sixth, the most languid of bureaucratic dandies, was there from the Foreign Office. Alfred, the seventh, was there from Eton; and although he declined dancing, on the ground that it was “so precious slow,” made ample amends for his inactivity by energetic at-

tacks on the sweet things and the champagne at supper-time.

It was a juvenile party as well as an evening one. Good-natured Lady Goldthorpe loved to have other people's children besides her own around her at Christmas time. A bright band of children overran the gorgeous saloons, and mingled with the throng of grown-up fashionables and celebrities, who were but too glad to pay their court at Onyx House and to its potent master. Many pages would be needed to describe that distinguished company, or even to enumerate their names and dignities. There were peers and peeresses, numerous foreigners of rank and celebrity, immensely rich bald-headed old gentlemen, belonging mostly to Banks and Boards, from the City; marriageable young ladies, marriage-making old ladies, and unmarriageable middle-aged ladies. There were members of parliament, barristers, doctors, wealthy solicitors, proctors from Doctors' Commons, wild slips of college-lads, friends of Willy Goldthorpe, Eton boys, young ladies from boarding-school, and a sprinkling even of artists and literary men; for Sir Jasper Goldthorpe liked to be well with all classes, and by his bounty golden rays were cast into the humblest homes. Amidst this varied, glittering, rejoicing throng, the Great Millionnaire glided about bland, serene, and silent. Nobody found fault with him for his taciturnity. It was sufficient to look upon him, to talk about his wealth in whispers, on staircases, in conservatories, by mantelpieces, and in retired corners. The talking department of the firm of Goldthorpe and Co. fell entirely to the share of her ladyship, whose conversation was not very profound, nor, to tell truth, very

grammatical, but who gossiped and laughed, and pressed people to dance and eat and drink, until every body was delighted with her. If she had been as mum as her husband, or, talking, had given utterance to the baldest nonsense, the admiration expressed for her would yet have been universal. Was she not the wife of the master of Beryl Court?

So all these fine folks enjoyed themselves in junketing and feasting till the night was very old, and the small hours began to chime from the buhl clocks. But a certain gloom and anxiety had stolen in among the gaiety and rioting, and sat on the countenances of three persons—Sir Jasper Goldthorpe, his wife, and Magdalen Hill. No Hugh Goldthorpe had made his appearance. Midnight came, and no Hugh. The time when his arrival might have been expected was long past. Had he missed a train from Marseilles? Had he been detained in Paris? Had he fallen ill on the road? His brothers did not know that his coming was so imminently looked for. It was to be a surprise to all—to his relatives as to his friends.

One, two o'clock in the morning, and no Hugh Goldthorpe. The gay company broke up and went home to talk of the delightful evening they had spent, the boundless riches of Sir Jasper, the charming eccentricity—had she been poor they would have called it vulgarity—of Lady Goldthorpe. The Sons of Mammon bade their parents good night, and retired to their rooms—all save the subaltern of hussars, whose cabriolet was waiting for him, and who drove down gaily to his club to spend the evening. Three persons were left in the stately crimson drawing-room in Onyx Square: Sir Jasper, evidently perturbed; Lady Gold-

thorpe, who made no secret of her approaching intention of seeking consolation in a flood of tears; and Magdalen Hill, with her pale face.

CHAPTER III.

Return of the First-born.

CAPTAIN HUGH GOLDTHORPE, M.N.I., ex-commander of the Daglishwallah Irregulars, ex-Resident at the Court of Duffa Khan Sahib, Rajah of Jowlapore, is weary of Indian service. Barely five years have elapsed since he was last in England on sick leave; but he has sought and obtained fresh *cong  *. He contemplates a much longer stay in Europe; and, indeed, it is exceedingly problematical whether he will ever return to either of the three Presidencies. He has shaken the branches of the Pagoda tree quite long enough, and longs to enjoy his *siesta* at the foot thereof. Six feet two in his stockings stands Hugh Goldthorpe, strongest and coolest *sabreur* of his corps, skilful in diplomacy, wise in durbar. He is of the stuff of which great soldiers and statesmen are made; but his father is too rich, and his allowances have been too handsome, for him to continue seeking fresh advancement in either career. He has had enough of glory, both in soldiering and negotiation, and is only desirous of rest, and the enjoyment of the wealth that is to be, or is already his, and the wife long since promised to him. His desires are modest, you see. The affianced one—the Beloved One—is a stately lady, and a haughty one, withal; but she has told him that she loves him with her whole heart and soul, and that is

enough for Captain Hugh. So the hero of many intricate negotiations with crafty Asiatics, and of fifty hand-to-hand combats with fierce Sikhs and Afghans, tranquilly puffs his cheroot in the expectation of a speedy return to England, home, and beauty. He has engaged a saloon berth in the Peninsula and Oriental Company's ship *Isis*, and, by the last days of December, he gaily augurs that he will be in London. He feels happier than many passengers on board, albeit they may be nearly as rich as he, can feel; for he has been fortunate enough to bring his liver away with him. He is broad of chest and sturdy of limb, with handsome straight-cut features, a mobile yet determined mouth, shaded with a thick Saxon moustache, and a long silken beard curling down nearly to his waist. He will have that latter appendage trimmed within moderate limits when he reaches the shores of Albion. He is very brave, and strong, and resolute; but he is none the less joyous and amiable in private life. A lion in the field, a fox in the council, he is a very lamb in the compound; and scores of blushing virgins of all ages—from innocent, trusting seventeen to perspicacious thirty-five—who had been imported to India by *rusée* female relatives, with a view of putting a stop to their dreary state of celibacy, have ogled Captain Hugh, and sung songs at him, and embroidered pretty trifles for him, and laid siege to his heart in a hundred different ways, every one of which, for all his lamb-like demeanour, have proved totally unavailing. Perhaps there was no citadel to besiege, nothing but embankments and outworks; the heart itself was in England, in Onyx Square, with Magdalen Hill. He has been away five years; but as he paces the deck of

the *Isis* he can scarcely persuade himself that so long a period has passed away. He leans against the bulwarks of the vessel ploughing her way through the long rolling waves of the Red Sea. He puffs at that cheroot again, and gazes upward at the fleecy clouds, passing gingerly—as though they feared to take too great a liberty with the Queen of Night—across the face of the shining moon. He thinks on his boyhood, on the happy day when he received his direct appointment in the Honourable Company's service, on his transition period of "griffdom," of his efflorescence as a full-blown subaltern. The dead dull heat of the climate falls harmlessly on him now; for he has sweltered year after year in the tightest of uniforms, and the heaviest of accoutrements, and again in all the charming *abandon*, full of wild sartorial reveries, and of his irregular costume, beneath the hottest-blazing sunshine. The mere heavy sultry languor of the Red Sea feels comparatively cool to him; but he recollects his sensations when, as a boy, he first reached that "other side" which, to Anglo-Indians, means all the country that lies eastward beyond the Egyptian desert, and firmly believed that his young life would be fairly scorched out of him before he reached his destination. Freshly came back to him the old doubts and fears, and surmises of what his career in India would end in; whether he would be slain in battle, or rise in civil employments, or in any case vindicate the old *sobriquet* of "Cockey Goldthorpe" bestowed upon him at school. How well he remembered his first sword, new and slender and shining! now he has half a dozen blades with him, all notched and red-rusted from deadly frays. He is coming Home. That one

thought has absorbed, for weeks, all the thoughts of his waking hours, and even of his dreams.

Home! He has reached Aden on his way; he has gone down into Egypt, and come to Cairo. At Shepherd's Hotel, where the Overland caravan rests for a night, he declines joining the dinner-party, and devotes his brief period of repose to eagerly devouring the contents of the English newspapers, brought by the outward-bound party of young cadets and yellow civilians who have just arrived. As the mail nears England, Hugh's impatience and home-sickness increase. The three days between Alexandria and Malta are spent almost in a fever. At the Valetta post-office he gets a packet of letters from Home,—letters which breathe love and tender interest in every line,—letters that tell him of the glorious reception that awaits him when he reaches his father's house. He sees no reason why he should not arrive in England on the long-looked-for day,—his father's birthday.

He leaves Malta for Marseilles. The confinement of the vessel becomes almost intolerable to him. He indulges in wild speculations of days when monster viaducts shall cross the Mediterranean, and express trains run without stopping from Marseilles to Malta. He sits in the bows of the *Messageries Impériales* steamer all day long; and when a sudden squall comes on in the Gulf of Lyons, and delays the way of the ship by some three or four hours, Captain Hugh becomes almost frantic with impatience. Why can't squalls be put down by Act of Parliament?

Marseilles has been made, at last. Captain Hugh, during the last portions of the trip, has had his wits sufficiently about him to make friends with the mail-

agent, who, he knows, will go straight through to London at express speed, and whom he has persuaded to accept him as a companion.

Up the steep hilly streets of Marseilles dashes the post-waggon. Cutting in between long tumbrils drawn by long-horned oxen, and driven by Spanish-clad, swarthy, sleepy varlets, dashes and rattles, but never too rapidly for Captain Hugh, the homeward-bound convoy of letters and newspapers. Then he comes on to the French railway, and finds himself in mid-winter, and discovers that the pelisse he has been careful enough to bring with him, lined throughout with fur, is none too warm. Away over the flat dusky plains of the Midi flies the express train with its one carriage attached, shrieking, and sputtering, and roaring, but not too fast for Captain Hugh. He cannot sleep. Wakeful and lynx-eyed, he remains up and anxious; while his companions, the English and French post-couriers, are slumbering in their respective corners. There is no time for set breakfasts or set dinners. Long dusky loaves, with slices of Lyons sausage and fragrant-smelling Brie cheese are thrust into the carriage at certain stations, and then and there devoured by the three travellers. The repast is washed down by great gulps of Médoc, imbibed in the most primitive fashion from the bottle's mouth.

Paris at last, and in time to catch the 7.30 p. m. express from Paris. In the rapidest of cabs, Captain Hugh scurries from the terminus of the Lyons railway to that of the Chemin de Fer du Nord. He makes such haste that he is there twenty-five minutes before the departure of the Calais train. He has parted company by this time with his friends the mail-agents,

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English and French; and they are quite busy enough over the stowage of their innumerable boxes to dispense with his society. Captain Hugh is admitted by special favour on to the platform, instead of having to wait in the *Salle d'attente*. That is the last favour the English courier shows him. Captain Hugh secures a place for himself in a particularly comfortable-looking carriage, and places on the corner seat his pelisse lined throughout with fur, and his Russia-leather-covered despatch-box. He strolls into the refreshment-room, and has even five minutes for the discussion of his beloved cheroot.

About seven o'clock there has drawn up at the entrance to the terminus a pretty little one-horse brougham, with a coachman in a livery that has something of an English fashion. A lacquey who sits beside him dismounts, and assists a lady, who is the sole occupant of the carriage, to alight. A porter comes up, and, touching his cap, asks politely whether Madame is going by the *train express*. No; Madame has not any such intention. She is merely here to see a friend off. She bids the coachman go away, and away he drives. Then, followed by a little Blenheim spaniel, Madame walks into the great entrance vestibule of the station, where porters are rushing about with trucks full of luggage, and people are crowding to the ticket office, and vendors of cheap periodicals are offering their wares for sale, and idlers are wandering about and staring, and police agents are watching.

Madame is very short and slight in stature, and is richly clad in very wide-spreading skirts. The hems of her garments are marvels of fine linen and needlework. She is exquisitely *gantée*. She has sparkling

bracelets on her arms. Her bonnet is a paragon. She wears her veil down; but it is transparent enough for you to see, beneath, that her face is very pretty, that she has a very fine colour in her cheeks, that her teeth are very white, that her mouth is very smiling, and that she has very fair flowing ringlets.

She looks about her, and stamps her little foot as though in impatience. Anon she espies a diminutive and shabbily-attired man, with curly grey hair, and a peaked nose somewhat purple in hue. In face and gesture he is not unlike a ferret. She beckons to him imperiously; and the little man comes smirking and bowing up to her, rubbing his hands.

"Is he here, Sims?" Madame asks in the English language.

"He is, and, O be joyful," answers the little shabby man, with a grin that makes his face look more and more like a ferret, "our agents have not deceived us. The telegraphic message from Marseilles was perfectly correct. He came with the courier in charge of the mails, and I have just seen him in the refreshment room. This has been a day of great grace."

"Do your errand," Madame says, tossing her ringlets, and turning to caress her Blenheim spaniel.

The little shabby man hurries away, and at the door of the *Salle d'attente* he meets a stalwart young Englishman with a fair moustache and a silky beard.

"Captain Hugh Goldthorpe?" the little man says, tentatively rubbing his hands and grinning again.

"That's my name," answers the individual so addressed; "and what might you want with me?"

"There's a lady close by who would just have one moment's conversation with you."

Hugh's thoughts revert to his mother and Magdalen Hill. Could they have come to Paris to meet him?

"A lady! where is she?" he cries out eagerly.

"Yonder," answers the messenger, and points to where the lady who has despatched him stands, her back turned, and caressing her little spaniel.

The loving eyes of Hugh could see at a glance that this was neither Lady Goldthorpe nor Magdalen Hill. Whom could it be? He knew scarcely any one in Paris, and certainly he had no female acquaintances in that capital. He laughed, and looked at his watch.

"It's twenty-two minutes past seven," he says; "I've not much time to talk to a lady. Does she know me, and how long will she keep me?"

"She knows you perfectly well, and she won't detain you an instant," the shabby messenger replies.

With another laugh, thinking there must be some mistake, gallant Captain Hugh advances to a lady, takes off his hat, and, with a low bow, asks in French of what service he can be to her.

"The lady speaks English," remarks the shabby little man, with the most peculiar grin he has yet given.

The lady turns round, raises her veil, and looks Captain Hugh Goldthorpe full in the face. He starts back with something very like a cry of horror.

"Merciful Heavens!" he exclaims, "it is Mrs. Armytage!"

But time and the express-train will wait for no man. The bell rings. The cry of "*Prenez vos places—en voiture*" is heard. The passengers rush through the open doors of the *Salle d'attente* on to the platform. A stalwart young man, with a thick beard and mous-

tache, hurriedly opens the door of a carriage, sees a furred pelisse and a Russia-leather despatch-box lying on one seat, and jumps in. Doors are slammed, a shrill whistle is audible, and the Calais express starts.

On that selfsame evening of the 27th of December, shortly before midnight, an appalling accident happened to the express train from Paris. Close to a station called Armentières, between Arras and Hazebrouck, the engine ran off the rails and into a luggage-train going up the line. Both trains came into dire collision. The damage was tremendous, the carnage awful. Seven persons were killed and nearly thirty frightfully injured.

When assistance had been procured, the labourers and police who had hastened to the scene of the catastrophe proceeded to extricate the dead and dying from the shattered ruins of the passenger train. One carriage was found positively crushed to pieces, and a full hour elapsed before it could be ascertained whether any traveller lay buried beneath its fragments. At last the task was accomplished, and a doleful spectacle presented itself. One corpse was found; but it was so awfully disfigured, so crushed and pounded and mashed and battered and gashed, as to have scarcely any human semblance left. Of the countenance, indeed, there remained positively nothing that could lead to the discovery of its identity.

"*Rien dans les poches;*" nothing in the pockets save French and English money, and his watch, marked "Benson, London, 55,304," the chief of the station remarks, with a melancholy shake of the head, after such dreadful superficial examination as was possible

had taken place of the dead thing's garments. "Stay, what is this beside the *cadavre*?"

The assistants turned their lanterns to the spot pointed out by the inspector. Close to the side of the corpse, drenched with blood, but quite intact, they found a despatch-box covered with Russia leather, and a pelisse lined throughout with rich sable fur. The leathern case was locked; but in the side pocket of the pelisse was a morocco pocket-book, which being examined was found to contain a packet of letters, with the English and Maltese post-marks, addressed to Captain Hugh Goldthorpe, H.E.I.C.S.; and a passport five years old, covered with *visas*, in which the principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of her Britannic Majesty requested all authorities, civil and military, to allow free passage, and afford assistance in case of need, to Captain Hugh Goldthorpe, captain in the service of the Honourable East India Company, travelling abroad.

"*Il n'y a plus de doute*," said the inspector, with a melancholy shrug of the shoulders. "That mass of bloody clay must be the captain. *Pauvre enfant!* And he has a mother, perhaps, *là-bas*, in England."

CHAPTER IV.

La Dame au Premier.

THE Rue Grande-des-Petites-Maisons runs at right angles from the Boulevard Pompadour to the Place Dubarry. Are any further particulars needed to tell you that the thoroughfare just named is in the very centre of fashionable Paris? But you may be exigent. Therefore, let it be also hinted that, branching from

the Rue Grande-des-Petites-Maisons, runs that well-known arcade full of old curiosity dealers, jewellers, and print-sellers, the Passage Agnes-Sorel. You are scarcely a stone's throw, either, from the Rue Diane-de-Poitiers, which has for termination the Cité La Vallière; and, parallel to the Rue Grande, stretches the great, teeming Faubourg Ste. Frédegonde, the chosen mart of silk-mercens and antique furniture sellers. This being all duly mapped down, you are now recommended to take your Galignani's Guide, and find out the Rue Grande-des-Petites-Maisons if you can.

It is a street of the very newest, and belonging wholly to new France. The old site, once occupied by those quiet, sombre, narrow thoroughfares, the Rue-des-Bons-Epiciers, the Rue Cherche-cinq-francs, and the Carrefour-des-vieilles-parapluies, had been cleared shortly after the revolution of '48, to form the approaches to a certain Golden House of Nero, which had been centuries a-building. The Rue Grande appertains, stucco and soul, to the fresh dynasty. No grim hotels, *entre cour et jardin*, as in the Faubourg St. Germain, tenanted by fossil legitimists, whose hearts are in the highlands of Frohsdorff, and who call the proprietor therefore Henri Cinq, are to be found in the Rue Grande. It is disfigured by no shabby *maisons meublées*, or tenth-rate hotels, smelling all day long of cabbage-soup. It is debased by no mean *crêmeries*, greengrocers, or *gargotte* restaurants. No; the street is long and wide, and clean and comely, gas-lit, well-paved, full of new, handsome, dazzling white houses, with green blinds, with plate-glass windows, with veined and varnished doors, or else with entrance-gates in elaborate iron filagree. Its railings are of gilt bronze,

and its door-steps of granite. The houses all seem to be striving to effect a compromise between solid English comfort and flimsy French luxury; but they are altogether as unlike the old mansions of Bourbon or Orleanist Paris as a snug little *remise* rolling swiftly up the Avenue Marigny is unlike the lumbering old *coucous* that used to creep to Versailles and St. Cloud. For a new Paris has sprung up over the water; a Lutetia that has knockers to its doors; partakes of lunch—sometimes, it must be admitted, spelt “laouch;” rides in pill-box broughams and Hansom cabs; stares, eye-glass on cheek, out of the casements of clubs, instead of sipping barley-syrup at a marble table outside a café-door; and has recently Gallicised “*blackballer*,” as a verb signifying “to exclude;” bets at its Tattersall’s; reads its *Bell’s Life* and its city article, rigs its market and posts its ponies in the purlieus of the Bourse. Paris *est mort*—the old, the witty, the polite; *vive* Paris the new, the impudent, the brazenfaced, the speculative! But vice and frivolity are undying, and Paris is still as vicious and as frivolous as ever.

In 1849 the Rue Grande-des-Petites-Maisons had not attained the imperial splendour it now enjoys. Cæsar was not yet emperor. He scarcely was dictator, and every day of his tenure of power he was badgered, well nigh to the death, by politicians of every degree. In 1849 the Rue Grande smelt of scarcely dried cement and fresh paint. It had not received the impress of imperialism. At the present time, on reference to the *Almanach des vingt-cinq milles Adresses*, I find that it is tenanted by one Grand Referendary, two auditors of the Cour des Comptes, one Austrian Archduchess, one Moldo-Wallachian Kaimakan, and at least a dozen

female celebrities of the Parisian minor theatres, whose individual salaries average about thirty shillings a week, and who certainly do not spend less than a hundred thousand francs per annum, each and every one of them. Unless I am very much mistaken, too, the Rue Grande-des-Petites-Maisons contains the charming little Pompeian house of the Princess Rostolka, with "*Salve*" on the pavement of the vestibule, and "*Cave canem*" on the wall, and "*Hic lætantur Lares*" over the porch; and all the rest of it. Likewise the sumptuous hotel of M. Israel Portesac des Trois Chapeaux, millionaire of Marseilles, formerly of the Temple, dealer in ancient garments, and genealogically of Judea; but lately, alas! of Mazas, and now, I know not of what *Maison centrale* of detention and correction. Finally, I think I discover in the Rue Grande the gorgeous bachelor quarters of M. Roguet de la Poguerie, member of the Council of State, journalist of Napoleonic tendencies, formerly deputy for the department of the Haute-Dou, and member of the *Académie des jeux floraux* of Rascaille-sur-le-Nève. In 1840 there was no Rue Grande to boast such illustrious occupants. Plain Israel Portesac bought and sold old cocked hats, and was not above dealing, occasionally, in the furry robes of departed rabbits; and simple Jeannot Roguet was a doctor's boy in his native town of Rascaille, vigorously pounding medicaments in a mortar. Still in 1849 the new street was very fashionable, and very wealthy, and very gay. How could it be otherwise when its dainty tenements were already the residence of two Russian princesses, one English nobleman (Lord Barrymore of Wharton, who had not been to England since the revolution of '30, bought more pictures in a month than Mr. Farrer

could sell in a year, and whose morals were not quite secure from the tittle-tattle of the English community in the neighbouring Faubourg St. Honoré); of the mysterious and fabulously wealthy Grand Duke of Grim-gribberstadt; of Mesdemoiselles Henriette Coquillard, Nini Cassemajou, Euphrosine Turlupin, Aspasia Catin, Herminie Languedouce, Jenny Fagotin, and other dramatic heroines; and, to sum up, of LA DAME AU PREMIER?

La Dame au Premier, or, to come down to plain Saxon, the Lady on the First Floor, lived at Number one, Rue Grande-des-Petites-Maisons, and in a house seemingly large enough to lodge a regiment of dragoons; but having neither husband nor children she contented herself with the first floor, and was but a lodger, condescending to permit a banker to occupy the *rez-de-chaussée*, a stockbroker to live on the second floor, a *premier sujet* of the opera to be installed on the third, and any body who liked, and could afford to pay an enormous rent for somewhat straitened accommodation, to shelter themselves in the fourth or attic story. The name of the lady on the first floor was Mrs. Armytage.

She was a rich English widow, whose husband had died in the Indies. That the *concierge* knew well. The great Indies, he called our Oriental Empire. To that functionary she was the most adorable of her sex. A superb woman, he declared, pursing in his lips. A queen-like creature. An angel. She showered five-franc pieces on him. That woman should have the ribbon of the Legion of Honour, or the *prix Monthyon*, opined the *concierge*. She did not give anything to

the poor: they are always in the way, *ces gens*, those poor (muttered the *concierge*), but she was liberal, nay, munificent to him, to the postmen, to her servants, to her tradespeople. She received the very best society—the very best of the semi-imperial court of the Elysée Bourbon, the plutocracy of the Chaussée d'Antin, the most distinguished illustrations of the world of the Bourse, the Palais, the Green-room, the Republic of Letters, and the Jockey Club. The Faubourg St. Germain stood aloof from her; for had not Madame proclaimed her enthusiastic adhesion to Bonapartism? Was not her bed-chamber hung with green velvet, powdered with Napoleonic bees? Did she not wear an eagle in diamonds in her blonde tresses? The Faubourg St. Germain, in its dynastic sense, stayed away from the Rue Grande, and the fascinating first-floor lodger thereof, and was not missed; but many a son and heir of the Faubourg, many a haughty young vicomte, with more quarterings in his scutcheon than thousands of francs in his purse; many a wrinkled old chevalier or parchment-faced *Vidame*, with the cross of St. Louis at his button-hole, and the memory of the dear wicked old times when Charles the Tenth was only the Comte d'Artois, in his heart, stole away from the crumbling quarter of Divine Right to bask in the smiles of Madame on the first floor. Her salons were crowded to the vestibule every evening. The ladies and gentlemen of the English community before named came from the Faubourg St. Honoré to eat, and drink, and sing, and dance, and play. The gentlemen were in raptures with the rich Indian widow. The ladies were all but unanimous in abusing her. She was a little too charming to be admired by her own sex. On her part the lady

on the first floor frankly accepted all invitations from foreigners of distinction, and contributed to the *délices* of many French, German, and Russian salons; but she resolutely declined visiting, under any circumstances, her own countrymen and countrywomen. "Let them come to *me*," she said, tossing her pretty head; "I don't want to go to them." The English community had no excuse for cutting Mrs. Armytage, or for sending her to Coventry; for we English carry a Coventry about with us wherever we go—whether it be to the North Pole or the Andaman Islands. There was no mystery about her. Her conduct as a wife had been irreproachable. Scores of yellow-visaged Anglo-Indians resident in the French capital had known her husband, Major Armytage, of the Queen's army, who died of a fever at Goggerdebad in 1843. People knew that she had a pension; people surmised from her manner of living that the major had died rich. She had resided alternately in Paris, London, and Brighton during the seven years of her widowhood, keeping open house everywhere, receiving the cream of society, but never returning visits. Why should the English ladies of the Faubourg and the Cité Beaujou be continually girding at her, and yet be glad to rustle their flounces in the grand suite of apartments where Mrs. Armytage reigned supreme?

The first floor in which she lived might have belonged to a palace of the Arabian Nights. Major Armytage must have shaken the Indian pagoda-tree to some purpose, if all the fine things belonging to his widow had come out of her jointure and the pensionary liberality of the Honourable East India Company. She lived *en princesse*. The suite of rooms on the first

floor of the Rue Grande comprised a vestibule (coloured marble, fresco copy of Cephalus and Aurora, statuary, alabaster vases, &c.), a dining-room (inlaid *parquet*, pictures of game by Mytens, boar-hunt by Snyders, fruit after Rubens, insects by Abraham Mignon, silver Venetian frames, Japanese bird-screen, &c.); a grand saloon for receptions (needlework, tapestried furniture, ebony, mother-of-pearl, *consoles*, *guéridons*, *cabarets* full of porcelain, ceiling painted by Diaz, carpet of velvet pile *d' Aubusson*, pianoforte by Pleyel, harp by Erard, &c. &c.); a little drawing-room (pink silk and malachite, Turkish scenes by Décamps, aquarelles by Eugène Lamy, statuettes by Pradier, &c.); a delicious boudoir (white and gold, select library in alternate vellum and crimson morocco bindings, stained-glass windows, porcelain door-panels, aquarium, miniature conservatory, aviary, *priedieu* in carved oak, every conceivable variety of arm-chair, ottoman, divan, sofa, tabouret, *dormeuse*, *causeuse*, and *boudeuse*, and the entire apartment not much bigger than a butler's pantry, &c. &c. &c.). Finally, there was my lady's own chamber, the *chambre-à-coucher*,—remember that we are in Paris, and that there is consequently no impropriety in alluding to a lady's sleeping apartment,—with the famous green velvet hangings, powdered with golden bees, and a bed in carved rose-wood and gold standing in an alcove; quilt of eider-down enclosed in apple-green brocade; gauze curtains; a plenitude of mirrors; floor of polished oak, inlaid, with rugs of lion and tiger skins; Beauty's altar in the shape of a toilet-table; infinite trifles from Froment Meurice and Tahans'; tiny arsenal of pistols, damascened sabres, poignards, and fowling-pieces,—an odd fancy for a lady's chamber, but they were perhaps

trophies belonging to the defunct major,—and massive Elizabethan wardrobe. The bed-chamber was, according to continental custom, thrown open on reception nights, and, lighted up by scores of wax-tapers, produced sensations of delight in the spectator, which frequently approached frenzy.

It is time to send the upholsterer away, and bid the broker's man close his inkhorn and pocket his inventory. Mrs. Armytage is on her way home even as I write, and it might be dangerous to be detected in enacting the part of Paul Pry in her apartments. There is just time to let you know that the *valetaille*, the inferiors of Mrs. Armytage's household, had their quarters, as beseemed their degree, on the same vast first floor of No. 1, Rue Grande-des-Petites-Maisons. Where the kitchen was situated remained a mystery; but there must have been one on the premises, else how could M. Estragon (formerly of the Chimborazan embassy), the accomplished *chef* of the lady on the first floor, have concocted those delicate little dinners, those exquisite little suppers, for which he and Mrs. Armytage were alike renowned, and which had extorted the admiration of the most exacting epicures of Paris—epicures before whose searching gaze the butler of the Trois Frères faltered, and the waiters of the Café de Paris trembled. Mrs. Armytage's wines had a special celebrity of their own. She had a dry champagne which made fools witty and ugly women look handsome. She had a sparkling Burgundy which seemed to sing songs of its own accord as it danced in the glass. She had a Romanée Conti, after drinking which authors rushed home and wrote thrilling romances, and M. Israel des Trois Chapeaux added hundreds of thou-

sands of francs to his fortune by bold speculations on the *hausse*.

For servants there were M. Estragon, erst of the Chimborazan embassy, cook and *maître d'hôtel* as aforesaid—of foolish fat scullions, I say nothing; Mademoiselle Reine, lady's maid, tall, supple, and discreet; Monsieur Benoît, *valet de chambre*, butler and factotum, grave, solemn, silent, clean shaven, clad in raven black, and on gala occasions appearing in black shorts and silk stockings. When the Grand Duke of Grimgribberstadt came—he was expected on the very night of which I am speaking—M. Benoît appeared with a slender silver chain round his neck, ruffles, and a slim mourning sword by his side. The ladies of the English community sneered at what they stigmatised as ridiculous ostentation. Mrs. Armytage laughed—she was always laughing—and declared that Benoît had served crowned heads in his time, and that if she did not allow him to wear his sword and chain on state occasions he would give her warning. She did not even resent the satirical inquiry of the young Marquis Boissecc de Puitssec, at to whether her *valet de chambre* was in the employ of the Pompes Funébres,—and indeed his ceremonial costume did not ill resemble that of the head undertaker at a French funeral. This was the same M. de Boissecc de Puitssec who was shortly afterwards slain in a duel in the Bois de Vincennes by M. Hector de Viellesouche, formerly of the Gardes du Corps, on a quarrel arising from a bet as to the number of Mrs. Armytage's flaxen ringlets. Boissecc said there were fifteen on one side and fourteen on the other; Viellesouche betted that the numbers were equal. They could not agree about payment; so they quarrelled and

fought, and he died, and she—the lady on the first floor—laughed louder than ever.

I have omitted to mention one domestic of Mrs. Armytage's following; yet Hercule Moustachu deserves a word. He was the lady's *chasseur*, and wore a green pelisse elaborately embroidered, a gigantic cocked hat and plumes, Hessian boots, and an ivory-handled hunting-knife in his belt. Again the English community of the Faubourg had something to sneer at. "What does she want with that ruffianly creature, six feet high, with whiskers like blacking-brushes, and his absurd masquerade dress?" they kindly asked. Mrs. Armytage shrugged her pretty shoulders and laughed. Moustachu was her *chasseur*, she simply remarked, and wore the ordinary uniform of his station. Go to the hotel of the Chimborazan ambassador, of the Baratarian minister, or of the Ashantee envoy even, and you would find *chasseurs* similarly accoutred. He *was* a droll creature certainly, she admitted, with his cocked hat and his big whiskers; and she laughed till her ringlets shook like the leaves in a summer's breeze. She was but a mite of a woman, and Moustachu was her protection. He sat on the box of her brougham beside the coachman; and when she walked abroad on the boulevard, or in the Bois de Boulogne, he followed her, bearing a great golden-tipped staff of office, colossal, imposing, and severe. In the winter he wore a pelisse of bearskin, which made him look, to say the least, tremendous and appalling. Great men—the very greatest—have their foibles, and Moustachu's weakness was *absinthe*. When excited by that stimulant, he was at first ferocious and the terror of peaceful wineshop-keepers, but would ultimately subside into the tears of

happy infancy. The malicious whispered that Moustachu had once been a giant at the fairs; and sarcastic M. de Boissecc (only a week before the duel) declared that he recognised the *chasseur* as a former assistant to a travelling quack doctor, and that he had seen him in a scarlet toga and a Roman helmet grinding the organ in the dickey of a phaeton, while Dulcamara, his master, vaunted his pills and potions to the simpletons around.

"What a droll idea!" cried Mrs. Armytage, laughing, when some kind friend—I think it was an English lady of the community—repeated M. de Boissecc's words to her.

The English community—the female part of it, at least—had once endeavoured to put down Mrs. Armytage. There was positively nothing against her,—not a speck on the ermine of her fair fame,—not a flaw in her diadem of good repute,—not the tiniest peg whereon to hang scandal; but they tried to put her down notwithstanding. "That serpent must be crushed," said Lady Eaglesborough emphatically; and when Lady Eaglesborough said a thing, important results generally followed. She was the leader of the serious (Anglican) world of Paris, was very nearly as tall as Moustachu, had four daughters almost as tall as herself, whom, rumour said, she caned, and was altogether a woman not to be trifled with. Mrs. Cowpon, the banker's wife (Cowpon, Pécule, Filicoteaux, et Cie., Rue St. Lazare), entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with Lady Eaglesborough; Mrs. St. Leger Levius, about whom scandal had more than once, and with some appearance of reality, been whispered, petitioned to be allowed to join the league; the Honourable Mrs. Dip-ton, whose husband led her such a sad life; the two

Miss M'Caws whose father made that unfortunate mistake about the trust-money: gathered round Lady Eaglesborough. The serpent *must* be crushed, they all agreed. The terms "basilisk," "cockatrice," "crocodile," and "syren," were freely applied to Mrs. Armytage. She was to be cut, repudiated, ostracised, blackballed, sent to that terrible Coventry more dreaded than Norfolk Island ever was. The news of the conspiracy soon reached the widow of the Rue Grandes-Petites-Maisons, and she laughed for at least twelve consecutive minutes. "*They* crush me!" she repeated, almost with a shriek of merriment. "The insensates! You may tell them," she continued, turning to Mr. Simperleigh, of the British embassy, who was her informant as to the hostile intentions of the Faubourg, "that if I hear any more of this nonsense, Lord Barrymore shall produce all Mrs. St. Leger Levius's letters to him, written while her husband was in Jamaica. The plain reasons why Frank Dipton shot himself shall be put down in writing by my man Sims. I've got the newspaper report of the bankruptcy of that wicked old Dr. M'Caw, who was a schoolmaster at Greenock, and starved his pupils, the wretch, besides spending his ward's trust-money. Young Mistigris, the artist of the Rue de Bohême, sketches capitally in pen and ink, and he shall draw me *such* a caricature of Lady Eaglesborough caning her grenadier daughters; and as for Mrs. Cowpon, all Paris shall know how she pretended to go to Aix-la-Chapelle for her health, went on to Baden-Baden instead, lost five thousand francs at roulette,—on a Sunday night, Mr. Simperleigh,—and, not daring to face her red-headed husband, had to borrow money of Captain Lovelace to pay her hotel-

bill and come home. They crush me, indeed! Unless ample apologies are made to me, I'll tear off all their false fronts and have half their young men in Clichy in a fortnight."

Mrs. Armytage did not insist upon the apology, but the conspiracy melted at once into thin air. Lady Eaglesborough called on her to beg a subscription for the Destitute Couriers and Footmen out-of-place Relief Fund, and publicly declared that she, Mrs. Armytage, was a person of superior attainments and great energy of character. Mrs. St. Leger Levius went to spend six months at Bagnères de Bigorres; and when next old Lord Barrymore of Wharton dined *en petit comité* with the lady of the first floor, they both laughed till the *vermeil* and porcelain on the damask clinked again. His Lordship liked to dine in the Rue Grande-des-Petites-Maisons. He was to have dined there on the 27th of December, 1849, but, having a prior engagement with the Grand Duke of Grimgribberstadt, sent an apology, and promised to look in during the evening. For Lord Barrymore of Wharton belonged to the old school, and liked to dine as well as sup.

The half-past seven *train express* had started a good hour ere Mrs. Armytage left the vicinity of the Northern Railway terminus. "My man Sims"—the diminutive personage of ferret-like appearance—had quitted her, and Mrs. Armytage was alone. She had not even Moustachu the *chasseur* to protect her; but she was a woman of great mental resources, and feared nothing. She hailed a little *voiture bourgeoise* and bade the driver proceed to the Boulevard Pompadour; and just as the multitude of clocks scattered all over her apartments were tinkling out the hour of nine, Mrs.

Armytage was in her *cabinet de toilette*, arraying herself for a festal evening. It was a *fête* every night with Mrs. Armytage. Her sands of life were diamond dust, and Time gave her his arm with dainty politeness, and conducted her along a path all strewn with flowers. How old was she? You might have asked yourself the question a hundred times looking at her as she sat on one of the luxurious couches in her boudoir waiting for her guests, and have reaped only bewilderment and perplexity from your inquiries. As a rule, you are aware, it is difficult to tell the ages of blondes. Their complexion keeps; wrinkles and crows' feet are slow to appear, and their furrows cast no deep shadows; their hair rarely becomes grey. Fair women of fifty may often pass for their own daughters, unless indeed they become fat, when the secret is at once disclosed. Fat is fatal to either sex, and under any circumstances. Mrs. Armytage had no tendency to *embonpoint*. She was the rather *svelte*, slim, tiny, slender. You saw none of her bones, but you did not see too much of her flesh. Her shoulders were much whiter than the whitest opera cloak she could wear. Her eyes were very large and very blue, and they laughed at you to the full as much as her mouth did. As to the laugh itself, it was almost incessant, but it was neither a simper nor a snigger. You know the blondes who laugh in that manner, and who are, for the most part, utter and hopeless simpletons. Mrs. Armytage's laugh was by no means a hollow one—nothing like that dreadful cavernous "he-hee" of the actress on the stage—the laugh which is twin-sister to the stereotyped grin of the ballet-dancer. It was not a jocund laugh; it was not a "bitter" laugh (*risus sardonicus*); and the

merriment in which this lady indulged was by no means contagious. Very few people felt inclined to laugh with, or at, or after the laughing lady of the Rue Grande-des-Petites-Maisons. "She is a mermaid whose mother was a laughing hyena," said Lord Barrymore of Wharton of the lady, with whom he was so fond of dining.

All this brings us no nearer the solution of the problem as to Mrs. Armytage's age. She was not the kind of person to let you into the secret herself. There were ladies and gentlemen in plenty who came to her saloons, and who had known her, some for ten and some for fifteen years; but they were no closer to certainty than her most recent acquaintances. She had always looked young. She always had that fresh bloom on her cheeks, the bloom which didn't look like rouge, and which I don't believe was rouge. There were no *fossettes* in her neck, no creases beneath her eyes, not a touch of the Enemy's finger round the muscles of her mouth. There she sat on the couch in the boudoir, radiant in sea-green silk and pink bows and point-lace, and blazing with diamonds and rubies, and shaking her blonde ringlets as she played with and laughed at her little Blenheim spaniel.

She had dined alone, and in this same boudoir. M. Estragon had taken the same pains with her solitary repast as though it had been a banquet for fifteen. Moustachu the *chasseur* brought the dishes to the door, but he was not suffered to pass the magic portal. M. Benoît, in full dress, himself, served the lady on the first floor. She tasted a little *purée*, a morsel of *turbot à la crème*, a tiny corner of *vol-au-vent*, a delicate slice of *chevreuil en poivrade*; but she ate up the whole of a

fat little bird in a very nimble and cat-like manner, and crunched its succulent bones with great apparent gusto. Wines were presented to her in due course, the still and sparkling, the vintages of Bordeaux and of the Côte d'Or. She barely put her lips to the glittering crystal, but she drank a little glass of Curaçoa after her thimblefull of black coffee served up in a tiny cup of eggshell porcelain—real Sèvres, you may rest assured.

So she sat and played with the lap-dog, laughing at his gambols, and, anon, took down a daintily-bound novel—it was one of the admired works of M. Pigault-le-Brun, I am afraid, although on the back the volume was lettered *Œuvres de Racine*. She sat and laughed, and read and waited, but not long. Ere ten o'clock the *salons* were full of company. It was the most refined of Liberty Halls, and the guests wandered about pretty much as they pleased; only they were expected to take their departure at midnight. Special invitations were issued to the favoured few who partook of Mrs. Armytage's famous suppers.

I look back years, and stroll in spirit across the years through the dazzling chambers. I see the groups at the card-tables, piles of napoleons by them, silently but eagerly playing *écarté* or *baccara*. *Lansquenét* was never heard of in this particular house of the Rue Grande. Respectable English fogies played whist sometimes for five-franc points. The starched married ladies of the English community generally kept together, and whispered disparagement of the hostess. "That horrid gambling" they were chiefly severe against. Young English lads were warned by prudent mammas against *baccara*, and, steading into the contiguous saloon, be-

gan immediately to play at the pleasing game denounced; young English ladies were warned, by the same anxious parents, not to enter into flirtations with those "dangerous Frenchmen;" but the peril of the Gallic element was overrated, so far at least as the daughters of Albion were concerned. Plenty of French dandies came from the Jockey Club, de Faubourg St. Germain, and the Café de Paris; but, as the knowledge of the English language possessed by the majority of their number was infinitesimal, their active flirtation with *les blanches meess* did not extend beyond ogling the fair ones, and twirling their moustaches at them in a fascinating and engaging manner. ✓

I look back across the years, and see the boudoir whose threshold only the *élite* of the company dared, by a tacit kind of understanding, to pass. It is there the lady on the first floor by preference remains. She glides in and about all her rooms and all her company, and performs all the duties of hospitality with irreproachable ease and grace; but her home is in the boudoir, and there chiefly she sits enthroned. On one divan you may see the rigid form and coal-black beard of the Grand Duke of Grimgribberstadt. He was reigning Grand Duke once; but political complications, culminating, to tell truth, in the summary burning of his palace about his ears, caused his separation from an ungrateful people, and the enforced abdication of a remarkably prickly crown. His Effulgency—such is his Teutonic title—is very wealthy and very peculiar. It is said that his cheeks are painted, and that his beard is dyed. It is reported that he keeps the whole of his fortune in ready money between the mattress and the palliasse of his bed; and that around his

couch is a terrible assortment of spring-guns, and twenty-bladed poniards that dart forth at the slightest touch like the instruments of a cupper. It is rumoured also that he will trust no servant of his to prepare his meals—having a dread of poison—and that his daily repasts are sent to him hot and hot each day from a different *restaurant*. Certain it is that the Grand Duke of Grimgribberstadt is a mysterious-looking personage, and that his eye is an evil one. He has a cluster of diamond rings on every finger. The buttons of his waistcoat are brilliants of the purest water. His studs in rose diamonds are prodigious. He is the only man in Europe who possesses an orange tawny diamond, with, wonder of wonders, the Grand Ducal arms of Grimgribberstadt engraved thereupon. He sits rigid and superb, and blazing. His conversation is limited to one topic, the Italian Opera, and, it must be further admitted to one opera, *The Barber of Seville*. “*Est-ce qu’on se fatigue jamais du Barbier?*”—“Do we ever grow tired of the Barber?”—asks his Effulgency, and poses you. Then he is silent for half an hour. “*Mais l’air de la Calomnie!*” he interposes clinchingly, when something is said about evil speaking. Another half-hour of silence elapses. Suddenly he rises, murmurs, “*Buona sera,*” recalling the famous concerted piece in his beloved opera, and, dislocating for one instant one of his cervical vertebræ, by which it is understood that his Effulgency bows, he sails away, and is conducted by M. Benoît, bearing waxen tapers, to his carriage—that heavy vehicle with the panels and shutters said to be of iron and shot-proof, and of which the two coal-black horses with the silvered harness have been pawing the flags impatiently these two hours.

About eleven, a little brougham drives up to the door of Number One. A tall footman jumps off the box, darts upstairs, pulls the crimson silk cord at Mrs. Armytage's door, says to the *chasseur*, "*Madame la Baronne*," darts downstairs again, flings open the brougham door, cries "*On attend Madame*" to the inmate, and hustles or carries, or pushes,—he seems to do it so rapidly,—rather than conducts, a little ball of rich sable fur, surmounted by a little sky-blue hood, up to the apartments of *La Dame au Premier*. Mademoiselle Reine is in waiting, and unwinds the little cocoon of sable and sky-blue. With lightning rapidity you see Mrs. Armytage in her boudoir, curtsying to a dumpy little woman in black velvet and amethysts, with a towering plume on her little head. She looks like Humpty Dumpty who has fallen off the wall and has been half submerged in an ink-bottle. The company crowd about the silken hangings of the boudoir portal, and listen with rapt attention while, in a deep contralto voice, the little dumpy woman declaims something; it may be the grand tirade from *Mary Stuart*, the *Hélas!* scene in *Les Horaces*, the "*Es ist nicht lange*" speech from *William Tell*, the *Timbaliers* of Victor Hugo, or the "*Pour nous conserver purs*" passage from Lamartine's *Jocelyn*. She declaims, perorates; there is a burst of applause; Mrs. Armytage curtseys again; fifty people say what they do not in the least mean; the dumpy little woman hurries away again, is robed by Mademoiselle Reine, caught up again by her footman, popped into her carriage, and rattled away to the far end of the Rue de Lille, where she will favour the guests of La Princesse de Chinon-Croisy with a similar burst of elocution. Mrs. Armytage's

guests burst out laughing, and whisper, "*La Baronne* is madder than ever." This is the Baronne de Biffinbach. Her spouse, M. de Biffinbach, formerly Hof Kammerer to the Landgrave of Sachspflugen-Hamstein, is an entomologist, and passes the best part of his existence in the society of spiders, alive and dead. The Baronne has a rage for elocution. She will probably declaim at five or six houses this evening. Last year her *lune* was for fresco-painting, and she insisted on being suspended in a basket to the ceiling of her dining-room while she executed Cupids and Muses thereupon. Some wet plaster got into the Baroness's eye one day, and she abandoned Art for Eloquence. She has had manias for animal magnetism, for ascetic devotion, for *lansquenet*, for St. Simonianism, and for tricks of legerdemain; but she has always been a very charitable, kind-hearted woman, and every body likes her.

That grand old man, so grave, so dignified, so venerable in his flowing white locks, with such an exquisite hand, such a symmetrical foot—*le beau vieillard*—is M. Laplace de Fontenelle the Academician? Not in the least. Yonder mean-looking little old man, dabbing his forehead with a blue cotton pocket-handkerchief, is the illustrious writer and *savant* you mean. Well, it must be my Lord Barrymore. You are wrong again. His lordship is the jovial, red-faced gentleman with the white teeth and the black whiskers who is bending over Mrs. Armytage, and slyly chuckling over some story she is telling him. The grand and dignified patriarch is no less than old Monsieur Fourbel—Papa Fourbel—Nini Fourbel, the wags of the small satirical journals call him. He has been a chemist and druggist,

and has made a fortune out of lollipops to cure catarrh. He has been a stockbroker, and made another fortune out of the *hausse* and the *baisse*. He has been manager of the Opera, and made fortune number three out of the throat of Duprez and the ankles of innumerable *coryphées*. He has been proprietor of the Republico-Monarchico-Orleanico-Bonapartist journal the *Girouette*. He started the Carpentras and Brives-la-Gaillarde Railway, and realised early. He sold, at premium, all his shares in the Docks Elagabale, the *Société anonyme des Marchands de Marrons chauds*, the *Compagnie d'Assurances contre la Migraine*, and other notable speculations. Had he resided in England, Sir Jasper Goldthorpe would have been proud of his acquaintance. This lucky old man might have rivalled the great Hebrew M. Portesac des Trois Chapeaux in wealth, but for his insatiable devotion to eating and drinking. The magnificence of his dinners is only equalled by that of his breakfasts. In oysters alone he spends a princely revenue. He is the one *gourmet* who has ortolans on his table all the year round. "To others the fame of Croesus, of Ouvrard, or Paris-Duvernay," he says, proudly: "I am the emulator of Lucullus; I am the successor of Cambacérès. I would settle fifty thousand francs a year on the widow of the man who would consent to be thrown into a fish-pond to feed my carp; and were Vattel alive he should be cook to Casserole Fourbel."

Back across the years, back till I can see the journalists, the dandies, the political adventurers, the foreign counts, the financiers, the stock-jobbers, the painters and poets of a perturbed period of transition and suspense. Things had not fallen into their places in

1849, and every one wondered at the position in which he found himself. Back! I hear a voice, sonorous, solemn, touching, wild almost in its searching tones, through the doorway of the chamber where the grand piano is. Ah! I know who this is. The Princess Okolska is singing. "Princess, you must sing," Mrs. Armytage has said laughing; "Society entreats this favour from you." The Princess rises and goes to the piano. She is a gaunt, bony woman, in an ill-fitting dress of tartan poplin, and a head-dress made of gold coins of Oriental look. She has big black eyes, and blue-black hair. Her husband, it is whispered, helped to strangle a certain emperor, and she herself is reported to be the daughter of a Circassian slave. She sings some strange ballad in an unknown tongue. The song, at first monotonous and faint, rises first to plaintive dolence, then to a passionate wail, then to a sort of cry of rage and despair. "That woman has been devoured by passions," says a journalist to a painter. At the end of the song, the Princess Okolska faints away. She always faints on these occasions. She is restored to consciousness, and caressed and complimented, and has a glass of hot sugar and orange-flower water brought her, in which, I am afraid, there is something stronger than either of the ingredients above-named.

This was the twenty-seventh of December, 1849. Seldom had so brilliant a gathering been seen in the Rue Grande-des-Petites-Maisons. There were richer guests, perhaps, at that very moment at a certain family party in Onyx Square, Tyburnia, London—a party where a father and a mother, and a tall girl with a pale face, were waiting; but for rank, and talent, and

wit, Mrs. Armytage's visitors had undoubtedly the superiority. And while the lights shone brightly, and the music streamed in either brave house on either side of the Channel, the Calais express was ploughing through the night towards the shores of the cold and complaining sea.

The majority of the company left, as was the custom, at midnight. After that came supper, of the richest and rarest, to the chosen ones who remained. Songs were sung, arrowy jests flew about, political intrigues were dissected, wicked anecdotes were told. There was deep drinking; there was deep play; and Mrs. Armytage laughed continually.

At last she was alone. The bed-chamber was being prepared for her. Mademoiselle Reine awaited her coming. She stood with her white shoulders and her sea-green robe, and daintily toasting one little foot at the embers that glowed on the polished hearth. Tiny tongues of flame came out of the logs, as if to lick her garment's hem in homage. The mirror on the velvet-hung mantel reflected something else beside lustres and Sèvres vases and Buhl clock. It reflected a woman's face and yellow ringlets and dancing gems. Something else, too. A face haggard and pallid, eyes vengeful and terrible.

She struck her little hand on the mantel with violence enough to wound it. She looked angrily at her bruised wrist, and twisted it in her other hand. She laughed no more.

"I would kill myself, if I dared," she muttered. "I am as beautiful now as I was four years since; and he has spurned me, spurned me again as he did before. I am richer than ever. There is not a penny belonging

to his wretched father but I could call it mine; and he has spurned me. . . . But I will crush him; yes, Hugh Goldthorpe," she continued,—and seeming to address a locket which she took from her bosom,—“I will crush you, body and soul, and the woman who is waiting for you yonder shall see you no more.”

She made as though to kiss something inside the locket, which she held open before her. But she closed the bauble with a sudden click, and thrust it into her white breast; and then Mrs. Armytage went to bed.

She was breakfasting at noon the next day—breakfasting in her little purple Morocco slippers and her morning wrapper of China silk, when M. Bénédict announced M. Sims.

M. Sims was as diminutive and as ferret-looking, but he looked more excited than usual.

“Have you heard the news?”

“What news?” the lady asked disdainfully. “That you smell of tobacco, as you do always, and do now? That is no news to me.”

“You are cross this morning, ma’am,” Mr. Sims remarked, shrugging his shoulders. “I have something here that will put you in a better temper.”

With trembling hands he unfolded a copy of that morning’s *Girouette*, and read out:—

“Telegraphic despatch from Armentières. *Epouvantable Sinistre* on the Northern Railway. Calais express came into collision with up luggage-train. Thirty-seven persons killed and wounded. Among the sufferers has been recognised by his papers the body of M. le Capitaine Hugh Goldthorpe, officer in the military service of the Honourable Company of the Oriental Indies, and son of Sir Goldthorpe, Baronet, and member of the Chamber of Lords of Great Britain. Further details will be given in our edition of the evening.”

Mr. Sims had probably never in his life executed a translation from the French with such rapidity. Nor,

I should think, was the recital of an appalling occurrence often received in so strange a manner as it was by Mrs. Armytage. It is a fact that she burst out laughing, and laughed so long and so loudly that the Blenheim spaniel, thinking that he too would be of the party, began to bark in doggish merriment.

"Was there anything ever so fortunate?" said the lady, at last panting for breath.

"It is a joyful thing," responded Mr. Sims, rubbing his peaked nose.

"There, Sims!" cried Mrs. Armytage, catching up her spaniel and bestowing a kiss upon his snub nose. "You must go to the Préfecture and get my passport *viséd*. I start for England to-night. I hope the train won't have another accident, and kill poor little me. Ha! ha! ha!"

CHAPTER V.

On a Field, or; a Cross, Sable.

THE blackest winter baked the earth to stone; and in the fields thin spikes of grass just contrived to pierce the hoar crust, naked and rigid. It was a black frost. The roads, the kennels, the pavements, the bare trees were dark and glossy. The roofs only were white with frozen snow, and had been so for weeks.

Strong handed Labour, frozen out of bread-earning, stalked starving through the town; wretched women whined and cowered, but hungry men wandered scowling and with folded arms about the shells of houses they should have been building. It was winter everywhere, and Misery came abroad, forlorn and piteous. Thousands were enjoying themselves on the glassy sur-

face of the park-waters, skating, and sliding, and shouting, and tumbling over one another for joy; but thousands more looked on from the banks, silent, savage, and famished. Vast blocks of ice floated down the river, and, collecting in creeks, ground up against each other with sharp noises. News came from the country of trains snowed-up, of whole flocks of sheep lost in drifts, of villages in the Yorkshire wolds cut off from all communication with towns and markets; of gullies between them choked with snow, of cattle frost-bitten, villagers half-starving. The Old Year laid himself down to die in an adamantine coffin, and the New Year was swaddled in icy bands. There was much feasting and merry-making in rich men's houses; yule-logs were burned, Christmas-trees shaken; dancing and singing were heard. The cold was not severely felt in warmly-lined carriages; and in thick-carpeted drawing-rooms and bed-chambers thickly-curtained, the price of fuel was not of much account. But in the narrow courts and dens, and over the London border, and on the skirts of docks and factory yards, and in the avenues of police courts, before the relieving officer's strong door, and by the Union Workhouse's pitiless walls, Starvation and Destitution cowered in their rags, and moaned their lack of common food, and warmth, and shelter, and made the evil season more hideous to the view.

If you take a million-rich man, and put him naked and without victuals or a roof to cover him, on a rock, and expose him to the nipping frost and the January blast, it will not be long ere he begins to shiver, and anon to howl in agony and despair; and at last he will crouch prone to his jagged bed and die. But in

the very centre of London, with his palaces and his vassals around him, it is difficult for the rich man to feel the cold. On that bare rock his millions in gold or crisp paper would not warm him, unless haply he had needles and thread to sew the money-bags together for raiment. When he is in London, however, the money will buy furred robes and Wallsend coals, and sand-bags to exclude the wind, and well-closed chariots to ride in, and Welsh wigs to draw over his head, plush gloves to cover his hands, and hot water bottles to put to his feet. Railway rugs, scalding soups and drinks, shawls and comforters, are all ready for him and purchaseable. The theatres, the churches, the counting-houses, the board-rooms, the marts and exchanges which he frequents, have all their warming apparatus, and become snug and cosy. No; I cannot see how it is possible for the English Dives to shiver, —were even Siberia brought to London, and the North Pole set up in the Strand in lieu of the Maypole which once adorned that thoroughfare. The milliners that serve Dives' wives and daughters may sell as many fans for Christmas balls as for Midsummer picnics; and after Dives' New-year's feasts the ice-creams and the ice-puddings are positively refreshing after the spiced viands and generous wines.

Sir Jasper Goldthorpe was the richest of rich men. The quilt of his bed might have been stuffed with bank-notes instead of eider-down. He could have afforded, had he needed caloric, to have burned one of his own palaces down, and warmed his hands by the conflagration. From his warm bed-room, breakfast-room, and study, his warm carriage took him, swathed in warm wrappers, to the warm sanctum of his warm

counting-house. His head clerks wore respirators, and had mulligatawney soup for lunch. The *Times'* City article was carefully warmed for him ere he perused it. His messengers comforted themselves with alamode beef and hot sausages and fried potatoes before roaring fires; and, when they were despatched on errands, slipped into heated taverns in little City lanes, where they hastily swallowed mugs full of steaming egg-hot and cordialised porter. The only cold that could seemingly touch so rich a man as Sir Jasper Goldthorpe was a cold in the head; and what possets, white-wine wheys, gruels, footbaths, doctors' prescriptions, and hot flannels, were there not in readiness to drive catarrh away from him! Lived there in the whole realm of England one man or boy mad or desperate enough to cast a snow-ball at the millionaire of Beryl Court? I think not. He was above the cold. It was street people only who were cold, just as the little princess asked the painter who came to take her portrait whether it was not true that "only street-people died." So Sir Jasper Goldthorpe, his sons and their thralls and churls, their tributaries and feudatories, let the street-people shiver as beseemed their degree, flinging them cheques and sovereigns sometimes in their haughty unbending way, and went on, warm and glowing, from a prosperous old year to a prosperous new one, when suddenly a Hand of Ice, that thrilled them all to the very bones and marrow, was laid just above the heart of Mammon, and of his wife, and of his children.

It was the Hand of Death, and it touched each with a cold pang, and went onwards, to touch some transiently, but to grasp others without release. Who-

ever felt its lightest pressure was chilled and benumbed. The icy hand came to Beryl Court and to Onyx Square, and all the gold of Mammondism could not, for that season, bring cheerful warmth again.

The News had come. A brief telegraphic message like a thunderbolt first fell. Then followed the lightning flashes of more messages; then the driving tempest of full details,—and the happiness of a household was scathed and blasted. No doubt, no hope could glimmer in the black night of their woe. The crushed, mangled, unrecognisable corpse had been gathered up at Armentières: the fragments of clothes, mingled with its remnants, were such as a man of Hugh's degree would have worn. There was the conclusive evidence of the furred coat, the writing-case, the pocket-book, and the passport. Hugh Jasper Goldthorpe was surely dead. According to the law of France, the remains should have been interred within four-and-twenty hours following the decease; but telegraphic messages stopped the interment. The dust of so rich a man's son was not to be lightly disposed of. The prefect of the department was written to; the English ambassador in Paris condescended to wait upon the Minister of the Interior and tell him of what golden parentage the young man came; and orders were issued to permit the transmission of his body to England.

The Reverend Ernest Goldthorpe remained in Onyx Square to comfort his bereaved parents. Lieutenant William Goldthorpe and his brother Edward, the Oxford Undergraduate, had to undertake a sad pilgrimage to Calais. They were preceded two days beforehand by Mr. Screwm, foreman to that eminent firm Messrs. Ravenbury Brothers, of St. James's Street. All the

melancholy arrangements necessary were confided to this well-known, and, indeed, historical house. They had buried the Princess Charlotte; and old Mr. Simon Ravenbury, who used facetiously to say that the elm wasn't grown nor the lead dug from the mine that would be needed for his shell and coffin, had married the grand-daughter of the undertaker to whose care had been intrusted the disposal of the decollated remains of the last nobleman executed for high treason in England—Lord Lovat.

The ill-omened messengers did their work, and met the two brothers at Calais. A party of French actors and actresses were coming over in the mail-steamer, but, though the night was wild and stormy, they huddled themselves on deck, and dared not enter the cabin, knowing what lay in the hold beneath. A hearse, all plumed and garnished, with a mourning coach and four, waited on the Admiralty Quay at Dover. The family lawyer, Mr. Drossleigh, head of a confidential department in Beryl Court, and Mr. Plumer Ravenbury himself, junior in the historical firm of St. James's Street, were also in attendance. Mr. Ravenbury's own black brougham, with the showy long-tailed black horse—its dam a Flanders mare that had assisted at the obsequies of William the Fourth—followed the coach that contained the brothers, the lawyer, and the confidential Mr. Drossleigh. A slight sojourn took place for refreshment at the "Lord Warden;" and it must be mentioned, as a stroke of genius on the part of Mr. Ravenbury, that the chambermaids who conducted the brothers to their apartments had black bows in their caps, and that the waiters who served breakfast were the most mournful looking of

their class, and had strips of black crape on their arms. This last, indeed, may not be so very surprising; for from the waiter to the mute there is but half a step, and *vice versâ*.

Mr. Ravenbury, so far as was consistent with his professional woe, thoroughly enjoyed himself. It was his and his firm's pride and pleasure to furnish rich men's funerals in the first style of Black Art. He was a little, bustling, bald-headed man, whose voice scarcely ever rose above a whisper, and every one of whose plaited shirt-fronts was worth three guineas. The black brougham and black horse were merely his professionally private equipage; and when a very rich "party" was to be conveyed to town, he took the sable vehicle and its grim steed down by rail. In Hyde Park, away from business, Mr. Ravenbury, covered with gold chains, with a white hat and a black band,—it is said that he continually wore mourning for a defunct earl, regarding whose funeral he had given too lax reins to his imagination, and whose executors had refused to pay the bill,—drove a dashing mail phaeton, with two grays full of fire and action. He gave joyous dinner parties and balls at St. John's Wood, and at Gunnersbury. His wife was a handsome lady, with a mezzo-soprano voice and a mania for Verdi. Her musical *matinées* were delicious; and the same embroideress who arabesqued the hems of her underskirts pinked the shrouds and ruffled the winding-sheets for Ravenbury Brothers. Plumer Ravenbury betted; but he had a keen eye for safe joint-stock speculations. Sir Jasper Goldthorpe did not disdain to bow to the undertaker when he met him at boards and public dinners. "Why should not an eminent upholsterer, who performs the

last sad offices for the very highest nobility, go into Parliament?" asked Ravenbury's friends after dinner at St. John's Wood. His sparkling hock was superlative! "Why indeed?" mused Mrs. Plumer Ravenbury, as her jewelled fingers paused on the keyboard of her Broadwood's grand. "I wish he would, and cut the bone-grubbing business," savagely cried Tressel Ravenbury, gentleman cadet at Woolwich; when his comrades taunted him on the paternal vocation, and nicknamed him "Hatchment." "Stuff and nonsense!" wheezed old Mr. Simon Ravenbury; "let him stick to the shop." Plumer's only son was destined for the Artillery. His papa would have preferred the Church—with an eye to a cemetery chaplaincy, the ill-natured surmised; and he had always had a great penchant for classical studies, being supposed to know all the Latin mottoes on his hatchments by heart; but Mrs. Plumer Ravenbury declared there was quite enough black already in the family, and Tressel was sent to Woolwich.

A dense crowd, whispering comments on the fabulous wealth of the Goldthorpe family, followed the mournful train from the hotel to the railway station. A special train had been secured, and Death and Sorrow sped through the icebound Kentish country to London Bridge. The same lugubrious ceremonial took place at the metropolitan terminus. Waggoners and cabmen stared in crowded Cannon Street, and Fleet Street, and Oxford Street, as the embryo funeral swept along. In the western part of Oxford Street, and the Edgware Road, where some of Sir Jasper's tenants dwelt, the shutters of the shops were closed. There was a great silent throng in Onyx Square as the dead man was brought home to his father's house.

Sir Jasper Goldthorpe had seen no one but his wife, his body-servant Argent, and the confidential Mr. Drossleigh, since the news came. He alternated between his bedroom and his study, and his children;—nay, Magdalen Hill even, did not dare approach him. Argent described him to his familiars, the lady's maid, the housekeeper, and the butler, as being less overwhelmed by grief than furious at his loss. The unhappy man's ravings and complaints had been fearful. He, usually so silent, had poured forth, hour after hour, torrents of passionate ejaculations. He disputed the justice of the decree that had taken his son from him. He menaced and defied the ravisher Death. His first-born could not, should not die, he wildly repeated. It was a shame. It ought not to happen. He was the richest man in the City of London. Then he relapsed into a silence that seemed to approach stupefaction. Let us draw a veil over this dismal spectacle. Who meets Death or bears its visitations in the same manner? Piety and Faith oft await its coming, shrinking and terrified; while sceptic cynicism turns its face to the wall, smiling. Nothing is there so unjust as to estimate man or woman's reality by the way they die, or undergo the bereavements in which Death is for ever dealing. Judge not from the dried-up eye; from the commonplace remark at the very grave's brink; from the solicitude for petty things while yet It is in the house. Judge not from the floods of tears, from the agonising wailings, from the days and nights passed crouching on carpets, or on stairs; from the hands that are wrung, the eyes that stream, the hair that is dishevelled. From earliest time men have set up a conventional standard of sorrow to be observed at

the death of their fellows. But it so rarely is the nature of humanity to act exactly up to the standard: there is so much grief that cannot be seen, and so much that is simulated and over-acted, that it is the rather a commendable convenience than a hypocritical formula to have professional howlers and mourners—hirelings who will tear their hair, and blacken their faces, and rend their garments; or their modern substitutes, who will carry staves in their hands and trays of feathers on their heads for a given sum. Let them do their office for the sake of the World and its usages, and we shall have time to grieve, each in our own fashion.

And as each of these children of Mammon so grieved, at their great and appalling loss, I leave the father and the mother: their woe is not for contemplation. If a man were as rich in children as Numenius, he is not to be comforted for the loss of his first child, any more than a woman can ever be comforted for the destruction of her first love. But those to whom Hugh had been brother felt the loss in more mingled kind. The Reverend Ernest Goldthorpe was now the Heir. His profession forbade that he should ever become occupant of the throne of Mammon in Beryl Court; yet still he might expect to enter one day into the possession of a title and almost boundless wealth. Would he rest content with a country rectory? Would his golden thousands prove stepping-stones to a bishopric? The second son of Sir Jasper Goldthorpe became at once a mark for eager eyes. He was but twenty-five years of age. He was unmarried. The nine hundred a year he had from his living could matter but little to him now. What a prospect lay before! Did he love his dead brother? Did he regret

his loss? The Reverend Ernest made no sign. He was a pale bloodless man, and ordinarily reserved. Solemn and severe, he took up his quarters in his father's house, and obeyed the behests which, almost hourly, were transmitted to him either in Sir Jasper's hand-writing, or by word of mouth of the confidential Mr. Drossleigh. There was an immensity of work to do. Drossleigh took care of the City business, and, had he even not attended to affairs in Beryl Court, there is no doubt that Sir Jasper's money-bags would have turned themselves over of their own accord, and multiplied themselves spontaneously. There were perpetual interviews with Mr. Plumer Ravenbury and his prime minister, Mr. Screwm. There were servants' and family mourning to be ordered: for the superior woman-kind of Onyx Square were quite beyond direction and advice. Mrs. Cashman, the housekeeper, had *carte blanche*, or rather *carte noire*, for the habiliments of woe. A select committee of Lady Goldthorpe's female friends kindly assisted her; and Cashman, installed in one of the Goldthorpe carriages, was continually driving backwards and forwards between Onyx Square and Mr. Jay's in Regent Street. That urbane and distinguished purveyor of ladies' mourning took her at once to the Unmitigated Woe Department. Whole bales of the paraphernalia of inconsolable grief were despatched to Onyx Square. Mr. Jay's young ladies plied their busy needles: tried on bonnets, and mantles, and skirts. All the lower rooms of Mammon's house were littered with funeral trappings, and the maid-servants dreamt of crape and bombazine.

There were hundreds of letters to be written to the vast circle of Goldthorpe's friends and clients, bidding

them to the funeral, or merely apprising them of the loss. There were the long and pompous advertisements to be drawn up for the *Times* and *Morning Post*. There was a sad letter to be sent to Malta, that the young sailor on board the *Magnanimous* should know that Mammon had one son the less.

It was premature as yet to speak of the tomb or the inscription. "I suppose Ernest Goldthorpe will write that himself. His Latin was never very good," opined many a clerical and scholastic admirer of the Goldthorpeian grandeur. "He fought bravely enough at the Sutlej. They can't do less than give him a statue down at Goldthorpe, or at least a couple of busts for town and country," reasoned Tom Praxtiles the sculptor, fondly regarding his unsold Bacchante and his unsuccessful design for a monument to Lord Hill, in his not too frequented studio in Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square.

"And then there'll be the monument in the cemetery, Praxtiles, my chick," would hint friendly George Gafferer, Praxtiles' boon companion, Boswell, and critic, who had looked in to inform him that there was a neat little paragraph about his last bust (Pessawee Ramjetjee Bobbajee Lal, the rich Parsee of Bombay) in that morning's *Comet*, smoke a quiet pipe, drink a bottle of pale ale, and give him another sitting for his own (complimentary) bust.

"There'll be no stonecutters' work where a Goldthorpe's concerned, my chick," George would continue. The worthy soul was thus naïvely affectionate with every body, and would have called the judge who sentenced him to death "my chick." "No broken columns, or quenched torches there, you may depend,

Why, they'll have a mausoleum, Praxtiles, with slabs of Carrara, and verde antique and scagliola columns, with gilt capitals and a bronze railing, and a weeping Victory at top. Write in at once, my dearest chick."

Praxtiles didn't write, but he left his card with kind inquiries, that afternoon, in Onyx Square; and meeting the Lieutenant of Hussars moodily walking through Bayswater, grasped his hand with a depth of sympathy that would have drawn tears from one of Praxtiles' own marble blocks. The sculptor had had the honour of dining more than once at Sir Jasper's, and he never dined with a rich man without at once laying the foundation of a plot for hewing his bust while alive, or his statue when dead.

Lieutenant William was constrained to walk moodily about Bayswater, for he could not sit all day in the darkened house, or in the frigid Jermyn Street Hotel where he slept. He scarcely knew his dead brother; but he was very sorry—the sorrier because his kind father and mother were in such dire grief. He was a good-natured young man, who could not think much. The most he could say about the dreadful catastrophe at Armentières was that it was "a shocking thing," and that "poor Hugh was gone, you know." He did not know how to employ his time. He wrote to his colonel and to one or two friends about the "shocking thing," and the gallant officers of the Nineteenth repeated at mess that it *was* shocking, and that "poor Hugh Goldthorpe had gone to the bad." But they talked much more about his father's money, and indulged in many surmises as to whether the parson would come in for the bulk, or whether Willy Gold-

thorpe would sell out and turn money-grubber in the City.

The subaltern would have liked to look in at his club in St. James's Square, but he knew that etiquette inhibited his going there. He dared scarcely enter the shop of his cigar-dealer in ordinary. The Reverend Ernest was too busy to talk with him. Miss Hill did not leave her room. He had an odd disdain for his three younger brothers, to whom he could not talk, and who could not talk to him. It was inconvenient to walk about Bayswater all day long; but at last he hit upon a happy expedient and compromise, and retaining a private room at his hotel, did there entertain a select circle of tall, stupid, good-natured fellows, mostly with tawny moustaches, and belonging to the profession of arms, who drank sodawater dashed with cognac, smoked very large and powerful cigars, made occasional bets on current events, and bade him "cheer up, old fellow." Lieutenant William got on very well with these friends until the funeral. It was just the kind of consolation he needed. He was not hard-hearted—only somewhat obtuse, and nearly a stranger to the kinsman he had lost. Who shall say that he was not as sorry as he might reasonably be expected to be?

The undergraduate and the clerk in the Civil Service had been mere boys when Hugh had paid his visit to England. They were bewildered and shocked by the awful intelligence of his death, but they could scarcely bewail it. They talked incessantly about it to each other, canvassed every item of the tragedy as lads will do; but how were they to weep, and what were they to weep about?

As for Alfred Goldthorpe, he was a child. The best thing that could be done for him was done; and the Honourable Mrs. Conybeare, who had a whole tribe of boys home for the holidays, took temporary charge of him. The little fellow did not understand much about the bereavement his family had suffered. He had never seen Hugh. He was chiefly sorry when the lady's maid told him that Miss Magdalen, of whom he was dotingly fond, was ill with grief. But the laughter of his playmates—their toys, and games, and sponge-cakes, and oranges, soon controlled him; nor could Alfred resist an odd feeling of gratification at the thought of the fine clothes for which the tailor had measured him, and which he was to wear, or banish from his young mind the knowledge that the sad misfortune that had happened in his family would invest him with a strange importance and interest when he went back to school.

Should these brothers of the dead have shown their sorrow otherwise?—and if so, in what manner?

CHAPTER VI.

“Resurgam.”

IN the early days of January 1850, the solemn funeral of Hugh Jasper Goldthorpe took place. The locality chosen was the cemetery at Kensal Green. The Goldthorpe family had been too recently inscribed in the *Libro d'Oro* of provincial aristocracy (Burke's *Landed Gentry*) to claim sepulture in some ivy-grown country church, the pavement of whose chancel was sown thick with monumental brasses and cross-legged figures, couchant, of mediæval Goldthorpes, dead and

gone. Hugh could not be laid with his ancestors; and Sir Jasper had ever calmly repudiated the convenient insinuation of heraldic parasites, that it might be possible to find a Goldthorpe well known as a Saxon franklin whose fathers had been here long before the Conqueror's coming, and the registration of whose land and swine had been unaccountably omitted from Domesday-book. The potentate of Beryl Court prided himself on being the Rodolph of Hapsburg—read "Lucksburg"—of his race. There had been some talk of a mausoleum in the park at Goldthorpe; but this idea was abandoned at the earnest instance of the mother of the deceased. Where her son's ashes were laid, she was determined, she said, to lie some day; and it should be, she insisted, in a Christian graveyard, not among the deer in a park. There were those among the Goldthorpe following who expressed themselves of opinion that Westminster Abbey was the most appropriate place for interment. Why had not Captain Hugh been killed at the Sutlej?—his representatives might have demanded a niche in the Abbey for him then, as of right. Sir Jasper knew the Dean. What were Deans good for but to be civil and do what they were asked? In the end, Kensal Green was fixed upon, and the freehold of a huge family grave purchased there. Praxtiles the sculptor knew its superficial area to an inch two days before the funeral. So did Fiddyas of Eccleston Street, Pimlico; so did Roubiliac Tompkins of the Euston Road. Now was the time. Tompkins fondly pictured to himself the means of getting rid of that long-completed group, "Pity weeping over Valour," which, in despair at seeing marble lie idle, he had begun to think of ex-

hibiting at Canterbury Hall, or selling to the proprietor of a tea-garden.

The day of the funeral was kept as a kind of mournful *fête* in Onyx Square. The little Miss Sardonixes (Dr. Sardonix, physician to the Court), next door to the house of Mammon, were excused that morning from attendance at the Hyde Park College for Young Ladies. They stood at the dining-room windows instead, and glued their young noses to the panes thereof, until the last of the brave funeral had disappeared from the Square. Pappadaggi, the music-master, was bidden to forego his bi-weekly lesson at Number Twelve. The Miss Bosuns (Admiral Bosun) were eagerly scanning the funeral from their drawing-room casements. Mrs. Twizzle from Maida Hill, Miss Ashtaroth, the old maid from the Harrow Road, who regularly attended the marriages at St. George's, Hanover Square, and (by special favour of a subsidised pew-opener) was permitted to weep plenteously in the organ-loft, with Captain Hawksley, R.N., and one or two evening-party young men, looked in before noon. There was a nice hot lunch at two. The Bosuns didn't know the Goldthorpes. The dead man was no kinsman of theirs. What harm was there in their having a little singing, and spending a most delightful afternoon? Old Chewke, the plethorically wealthy retired timber-merchant, formerly of Riga, went purposely two hours later to the Union Club that morning. He had declined an invitation to the funeral. He was a selfish old man, who ate hot veal cutlets in bed, and was afraid of the weather; but he watched the start of the procession narrowly, and to Chipp, his body servant, imparted his opinion that it was deuced

well done, and a credit to Goldthorpe. Chewke knew Plumer Ravenbury quite well, and nodded familiarly to that monarch of funeral-furnishing as he saw him hand the chief mourner into his coach; then, remembering the solecism in etiquette he had committed, he retreated to his study, and took Chipp severely to task for daring to peep at the *cortége* through the half-opened door. "Think of my health, sir," thundered the retired timber-merchant. Mr. Chewke did not like draughts in his house—always excepting hot ones (with spices and sugar) before going to bed.

Truly, it was the grandest funeral that had ever been seen in Onyx Square. There was no cheap local papers in those days (capital institutions are those cheap local papers), else some *Bayswater Chronicle* or *Paddington Gazette* would have described the order of the procession: the hearse and plumes, with the cypher of the deceased embroidered on the horses' trappings; the long train of mourning coaches; the longer file of private carriages—from those of dukes and marquises downwards, all with shutters closely drawn up, all with coachmen and footmen with long hat-bands;—the policemen who cleared the way and closed the procession; the crowds that lined the streets through which it passed. The chief daily newspapers did indeed each devote a paragraph to the description of the melancholy spectacle.

Throughout, it was the strangest mixture of the things of this world and those that belong no more to the world at all. You could *not* keep wealth and pride and feasting away from the black, dreary drama of death. Those who were being arrayed for mourners could not help fingering their scarves and hatbands,

and wondering at the thickness and richness of the silk. There was cake and wine everywhere; and people could not help taking port and sherry with one another. The maid servants could not help looking prettier than usual in their new black and glossy-ribboned caps. There was a buzzing of murmuring conversation most mundane while the last dread preparations were going on above—and till murmuring was hushed by the creaking of the stairs and the coming down of the bearers. Dr. Sardonix was one of the family physicians. His little daughters wagged their heads affectionately, and pointed their innocent fingers, until reproved by Zenobia, their mamma, when they saw the Doctor emerge, pilloried in the highest of white cravats, from Mammon's portals, and bow gravely to the undertaker's aide-de-camp, who assisted him into the mourning-coach. Dr. Sardonix knew the man by sight; and, in good sooth, Beaver, the functionary in question, had often officiated as toastmaster at the anniversary festivals of the hospital of which the Doctor was chief physician. In the dining-room, pending departure, Dr. Sardonix was, as usual, gravely eloquent. He was shorn of one customary subject of conversation, for he could not dilate on the curative treatment to which he had subjected the deceased:—"but Nature was too strong for us—too strong, my dear sir," would the Doctor wind up. But he was a ready man, and atoned for the loss of his topic by pleasing anecdotes of railway accidents. Here Bolsover, M.P.—who always went in for his borough as a red-hot Liberal at every general election, spoke and voted as a determined Tory till the last month of the session, then turned Liberal again, and was triumphantly

re-elected after the dissolution—cut in with quotations of celebrated epitaphs, and “Sidney’s sister, Pembroke’s mother,” “*Martini Luigi implora pace*,” and similar mortuary inscriptions that have become historical, were handed about with the cake and wine.

It was the same in the carriages during the dreary ride up the Harrow Road. The lawyers talked of abstruse conveyances, and notable wills, and picturesque Chancery suits, in which all the costs were costs in the cause, and none of the suitors got anything:—“Not a rap, sir,” whispers Mr. Probate of Bedford Row,” suiting the action to the word on his silver snuff-box, and treating himself to a pinch of Macabaw. The legislators talked politics. The clubmen talked club scandal and girded at the committee; the clergymen talked schools, missionary societies, Ecclesiastical Commission, and the *Times* newspaper;—I don’t know how it is, but the clerical body seem better read in the contents of the leading journal than the members of any other class in the community;—and the merchants and money-dealers, of whom there were very many in the funeral following, talked stocks and shipping, bullion, bills, and bankruptcy, and Mammoniana generally. The most direct reference to Sir Jasper Goldthorpe was made by Mr. Deedes, (Deedes, Ferret, and Wax, the great bank solicitors), who opined that, after all, Sir Jasper would be better for his calamity, for that “they could hardly keep him out of his peerage now.”

At every funeral there is a mourner—in mien, the gravest among the whole company—who makes jokes. I suppose he cannot help being jocose. His notorious propensity does not prevent his being bidden to funerals. The strangest thing about him is that he is only

facetious at funerals, and that at ordinary dinner-parties he is the dullest dog present. There was such a joker present at the solemnity now recorded. His name was Grygger. He primed himself well with old Madeira before starting. He was funny (behind the largest white pocket-handkerchief) all the way from Onyx Square till the tombstone-cutters' yards that herald the vicinity of the cemetery began to loom in sight; and he never forgot to precede each joke with a chuckle, and end it with a sigh. He was universally popular, although all his hearers were strongly of opinion that he ought to be thrown out of the coach-window.

And so, with faces that belie their thoughts, these children of mortality follow the poor crushed mortal who has put on immortality. There is a larger crowd at the cemetery gates. The spectators are packed closely in the street of tombs, up which the black train passes. The chapel is densely filled; the last orisons are said; the grave has been reached; the handful of earth thrown in; the cords are dragged rattling up; the company throng round the frost-covered planks that edge the grave, and peep over each other's shoulders to read the inscription on the gilded coffinplate:

HUGH JASPER GOLDTHORPE,

Captain H. E. I. C. S.

&c. &c. &c.

Died, Twenty-seventh December,

1849,

aged Twenty-seven Years.

"Resurgam."

"What does the last word mean?" timidly asks of Doctor Sardonix a little milliner's girl in a skimping plaid shawl, who has come to the funeral as to a show, and has edged herself in among the mourners.

Dr. Sardonix looks condescendingly over his pillory of starched muslin at the inquisitive *modiste*.

"*'Resurgam,'* my young friend," he responds in a dulcet undertone, "is a Latin word, and signifies '*I shall arise again.*'"

"Thank you, sir," says the little milliner with a curtsey, and runs off to tell Amy, her friend, who is staring at the tomb of the late Mr. Ducrow, of the grand crimson velvet coffin she has seen, with its gilt handles and cherubim heads, and golden plate, and how kindly the nice old gentleman in the white neck-cloth answered her.

"*Resurgam.*" One need not look into a grave to read that motto. You may see it painted on the hatchments in every undertaker's shop-window.

It was all over. The sexton who locked the chapel-door just paused as he noticed a fresh line of furrows on the great wooden turntable bier, covered with thousands of dints, in the centre of the edifice. "What a heavy coffin, to be sure!" he said meditatively. "Might have held three. Ravenbury Brothers have made a good thing of it this time." And so locked all up, and went to smoke his pipe at the little beer-shop hard by. The undertaker's men crammed the rich pall into the hearse, and hauled the plumes off their several pegs as though they were extinguishing so many corpse-candles. Then they rattled off to town, their legs swinging over the sides of the vehicle, and their jolly noses brightening up with the bracing

motion and the thoughts of the bowls of punch they would partake of that night. For Ravenbury Brothers gave an annual supper to those who did "black work" for them, and this festival happened to be concurrent with the grand funeral at Kensal Green Cemetery.

The carriages, of which the shutters had been so closely drawn up, and whose attendants had assumed such mournful adjuncts to their garb, did good service that evening in the conveyance of their distinguished proprietors to balls, and suppers, and pantomimes. Everybody went about his several business, and was business-like or convivial, sleepy or snappish, preoccupied or simply indifferent, as circumstances or inclination led him. Only Grygger the joker had the blues, slipped off to his lonely chambers in Duke Street, Adelphi, sipped mutton-broth for his dinner, and passed the evening in the perusal of Sir Thomas Browne's "Urn Burial."

Mr. Plumer Ravenbury had not conducted the funeral on foot. Members of the firm never did. It was Mr. Screwm who, ebony baton in hand, marshalled the procession, and walked valourously through the frozen mud to Kensal Green. He would not have derogated from his position by accepting a "lift" on the road, for worlds. Inferior undertakers might do it; but, as Mr. Screwm observed to his immediate subordinate, Beaver (by night a checktaker at the Olympic Theatre, Wych Street, Strand,—and much success to you, Messrs. Robson and Emden), "hif Ravenbury Brothers' 'ed man can't afford shoe-leather, and charge chilblains to the 'ouse, the dickens is in it. I'll have the next warm, my dear." The colloquy took place at the Mute's Head, Church Passage, Jermyn Street,

the favourite house of call for gentlemen who did black work. Mr. Plumer Ravenbury followed the *cortège* at a decorous distance in his black brougham; but he was on the ground and at the grave, and adjusted the chief mourner's cloak, and placed his Prayer-book for him. He had a civil word to say, too, for the Cemetery Chaplain, a pallid young man with a fishy eye, one of a race of hapless curates who had desperately clutched at the large salary attached to a charnel-house chaplaincy. Do these chaplains ever go raving mad from incessantly repeating the same solemn ritual, I wonder? We who listen to the noble Burial-service of the Church of England, and dwell upon its beautiful language, its austere eloquence, sit with charmed ears and reverent awe to hear the priest; but how is it with the unhappy ecclesiastic who has to read the service perhaps fifty times a day?

Sir Jasper Goldthorpe went straight from the cemetery to the South-Western Railway Station. Argent, his body-servant, waited for him with one of his own close carriages at the gate. The Baronet had borne up wonderfully. Natural emotion, and of the bitterest, he had shown in the chapel, and at the grave of him who had been his hope, his pride, and his joy; but he was soon nearly himself again; and save that there were deep-sunk cavities beneath his eyes, and that his hands and knees trembled (perchance with the cold), you would scarcely have thought that he had suffered this dreadful blow. He bowed to the company on leaving the grave, said a kind word to Mr. Ravenbury who was thrilled to the soul with gratitude thereby, pressed the hand of each of his children present, and, leaning on his second son's arm, proceeded to his

carriage. Plumer Ravenbury scarcely thought it in accordance with strict etiquette that the chief mourner's departure should take place in this abrupt manner; but he consoled himself with the thought that grief so intense and wealth so prodigious must be humoured, and, when the carriage had driven away, conducted Ernest Goldthorpe and his four brothers to the mourning coach (for even little Alfred had been brought thither) with a dignity worthy of a *chambellan* of Louis Quatorze.

Sir Jasper Goldthorpe found a companion within his carriage. Magdalen Hill was there. The blinds were down. The girl flung herself into his arms. They sobbed in concert, till the vehicle stopped at the entrance to the Terminus an hour afterwards; scarcely a word had been exchanged; and both were the better for their undisturbed grief.

Everybody in office at the Railway Station knew whom they were, and turned their heads away as they alighted, that they might not be seen to notice the swollen eyes of Sir Jasper and his companion. Argent had secured a carriage. Officials conducted them to it with silent respect, and policemen stood on the platform near, quietly warning off inquisitive travellers with a whisper that Sir Jasper Goldthorpe was there.

An hour's journey brought them to Goldthorpe Station, formerly Pogthorpe Road, but which had been rechristened in honour of the contiguity of Goldthorpe Manor, Sir Jasper's marvel of a place hard by. The mansion was a good two miles' distance from the station. Another carriage was in waiting; the servants in deep mourning. The lodge-keeper at Goldthorpe who flung open the gilded gates was in profound black.

The little charity-children who passed them on the road had crape on their arms. Tears trickled down the cheeks of the ancient butler and housekeeper, who received them in the grand entrance-hall; and Plutus, the big mastiff, whined as he crept towards his master and licked his hand.

There was a bright and cheerful fire burning in the dining-room: and when Sir Jasper and Magdalen had removed their travelling wrappers, the ancient butler, who had been nervously twitching his fingers and scraping his feet, as though he had some message to deliver about whose reception he was not quite certain, said, bowing deferentially:

"If you please, Sir Jasper, I was to give you this card, and the lady has been waiting more than an hour to see you.

The card was slim and limp, and glazed and scented. There was a crest engraven on it, and a name; and beneath, these words in pencil:—

"I must see you, instantly, and alone. I learnt that you were coming here, this morning. You cannot refuse me. I saw the last of Hugh."

Sir Jasper Goldthorpe hastily glanced at Magdalen, murmured "Some City business," crumpled the card in his hand, and hurried to the door. He darted across the hall into his study, where, sitting before a fire as bright and as cheerful as that which he had left, was a lady in very deep but very rich black, with a very elaborate black bonnet, and pretty little black kid-gloved hands. The drapery beneath her sombre dress was wonderfully embroidered, and she had just lifted

it to toast one of her little feet, daintily arrayed in a shining little black *bottine*, at the fire.

"Alone?" said the lady in black, inquiringly, when the Baronet entered.

"We are alone."

"Be kind enough to lock that door. Doubly. There's no bolt? Well, never mind. Thank you."

The lady rose, and put out one little gloved hand to Sir Jasper Goldthorpe, smiling, showing her dazzling white teeth, and shaking her sunny ringlets—of which she had a profusion—as she did so. The Baronet took her hand, shuddering, but let it fall again as though he had come in contact with some noxious reptile.

"And so you have buried your son?" she continued, quite jauntily. "Poor fellow! He was with me only five minutes before the train for Calais started."

Sir Jasper Goldthorpe groaned, and hid his face in his hands.

"Only five minutes," the lady in black repeated.

There was no response.

"You see I wear mourning for him. It was due to his memory. It is fit that I should go into the very deepest black for Hugh. I killed him."

The Baronet turned his eyes, wild in amazement, towards the speaker.

"Yes!" the lady in black airily repeated. "I killed him. I'm not a luggage-train, though; I had nothing to do with that horrid accident."

"Do you wish to drive me mad?" moaned the father.

"Not at all. Only to make you remember old times and old promises. Look here, Sir Jasper Goldthorpe,"

the lady went on, and seating herself coquettishly on one arm of the chair in which her companion crouched rather than sat, "you once threatened to have me transported."

"Woman, there were circumstances—"

"There were Devils, and there is one," interrupted the lady in black, with pretty testiness, and swinging one of the dainty *bottines* to and fro. "You threatened to transport me—poor little Me! And to think that I should have killed your son, the heir to your riches and your baronetcy! Sir Jasper Goldthorpe, I killed him with THESE!"

As she spoke she produced a charming little *bijou* of a pocket-book in morocco and gold. She took out an oblong packet of papers, the topmost one seemingly covered with faded writing, and crossed at right angles by more manuscript.

"*Regardez donc*," she said; "how pleasant the old writing looks. 'Accepted payable at'—wherever is the place?"

A minute afterwards she had unlocked the door, and stood in the hall, calling for "somebody, please!"

"Ah! there is Miss Hill," cried Mrs. Armytage cheerfully, as Magdalen's blanched face showed at the dining-room door. "Quite *éplorée* she looks. Oh! here is a servant. If you please," she continued, addressing the butler, "you had better bring some water, or some brandy, or some smelling salts, or something. I don't think Sir Jasper is very well."

CHAPTER VII.

Mrs. Armytage is as much at Home as Ever.

MRS. ARMYTAGE did not care to stay for the succour she had requested to be afforded to Sir Jasper Goldthorpe. She had done all that, in her opinion, was due to the claims of humanity. Could she, a lady and a comparative stranger, assist with propriety in the resuscitation of a gentleman—such a very rich one, too—who had fallen down in a fit, caused, no doubt, by excessive grief and by reaction of the nerves after the melancholy ordeal through which he had just passed? Sir Jasper was in his own house, and surrounded by his own attached domestics. The presence of Mrs. Armytage was clearly no longer needed; so she slipped through the throng of frightened servants, who were crying out that their master was dying; brushed past Magdalen Hill, who was hastening towards the study, and who regarded her with a look of haughty aversion mingled with amazement, and tripped down the great marble steps on to the terrace. Mrs. Armytage and Magdalen were old acquaintances. The house-dog Plutus sprang towards her with a growl; but she waved him off with her tiny kid-gloved hand. She was very fond of dogs, and called this one “poor fellow;” but as the animal stood regarding her with uncertain eyes, and uttered a low querulous baying, she sighed to herself, “Will nobody love me,—not even a dog?” The golden and purple peacocks, in their house by the frozen lake, craned forth their necks as Mrs. Armytage approached in her way down a lower terrace into the park that stretched for full a mile before Goldthorpe

Manor. It was quite pretty to see her picking her way along the carriage-drive between the tall old trees. She saw the woodman with his billhook pruning the dead branches. The man made a clumsy bow to her fair face and rich clothes. Her golden ringlets seemed to belong, somehow, to Mammon. She smiled graciously, and put a shilling into the man's leathern-covered paw—at least, it looked a paw, swathed in his huge verderer's glove. "A civil fellow," she thought. "What would he do to me if I were a ragged, barefooted girl caught stealing dead wood in Sir Jasper's park? There is a cage in the village, I suppose. Would they send poor little Me to gaol, or put me into the stocks?" And she broke into a bitter little fit of laughter, which rang very strangely through the frosty air of the evening. It was twilight when she reached the lodge-gates. The ancient keeper came out with a lantern to open the portals for her. The light shone upon her sombre dress, upon her white skirts and tinselled hair. It shone, too, upon the heavy gate-posts, upon the gilding and tracery, and the armorial bearings of the rich man displayed above the entrance to his demesne. "A pretty place," murmured Mrs. Armytage, giving the lodge-keeper another shilling. "And it might all belong to poor little Me!"

"You've seen Sir Jasper, my lady, may be?" Huggins the lodge-keeper inquired, in a respectfully sympathetic voice.

"I have just left the house," Mrs. Armytage replied.

"Do he bear up, my lady?" added Huggins, in a tone of affectionate solicitude.

"Wonderfully. He will soon get over it. A little

this way with the lantern. Thank you. Good night." And the gates closed with a clang, and Mrs. Armytage was gone.

"A nice-spoken lady as ever was," remarked Mr. Huggins to his wife, as he dropped the shilling through the orifice in a missionary society's box. "She didn't come up, though, with Sir Jasper and Miss Magdalen, surely. Didst thou let the lady in, Moggy?"

"Not I," answered Mrs. Huggins, his wife, addressed as "Moggy." "A'nt I been down to Pogthorpe till a quarter of an hour ago?"

"Then 'twas you, Tib."

"I never saw the lady," protested the young person hight Tib, who was a red-headed girl of fifteen, the lodge-keeper's grand-daughter.

"That's strange," grumbled old Huggins, settling himself down in a rush-bottomed chair to enjoy his customary afternoon's cough, which as customarily followed the afternoon's pipe, from which he had been disturbed by Mrs. Armytage's summons to open the gate. "That's pertickler strange," he continued. "I thought I should ha' recklected all that gold-coloured hair if I'd seen it afore. My memory must be getting uncommon bad, surely." And here, the customary cough overtaking Mr. Huggins, he substituted a bark for a wheeze, and so went off to a growl and a rattle, until his tea was ready.

Meanwhile Mrs. Armytage walked through the black winter gloaming. She met a rural policeman, and wished him good night with much sweetness. She was troubled with no fears of poachers or rustic burglars; although there were some very coarse, ruffianly-looking fellows lounging about the door of the Goldthorpe

Arms, half way between Pogthorpe and the manor. She was a courageous little woman, and went straight on. There was no village at Goldthorpe Station, formerly Pogthorpe Road; only a few stucco villas run up by a speculative builder, who had gone mad immediately after mortgaging the carcasses of his houses for thrice their value, and who was now expiating his taste for architecture at Colney Hatch. Two or three forlorn little shops had been started by traders who hoped to get some custom from the occupants of the villas; but as half of these edifices were not finished, and the other half had hitherto found only insolvent and fraudulent tenants, and one also, as it was, had already the reputation of being haunted, from the fact of a retired pig-jobber of evil disposition having cloven his wife's skull with a chopper in the front parlour the preceding Christmas Eve, commercial activity was not very remarkable at Goldthorpe Station. In fact, but for its vicinage to the manor of Mammon, the Company might have shut it up altogether without much detriment to the traffic. There was an unhappy little beershop, "The Railway Arms;" but the toppers of the neighbourhood preferred either the "Goldthorpe Arms" or the "Jolly Beggars" at Pogthorpe village proper, which was distant a mile from Sir Jasper's. The great man had once thought of taking Pogthorpe Road in hand, and had he deigned to smile upon it, it would doubtless by this time be as prosperous as Wimbledon or Kingston; but one of the porters happened to offend him one morning, by omitting to hand him his *Times* before he entered the train, and thenceforth desolation gathered over the yet uncompleted station of Pogthorpe Road.

It looked gay and cheerful enough, however, to Mrs. Armytage, as she terminated her dark walk, and was accosted at the entrance to the station by the driver of the solitary fly with the knock-kneed horse attached to Pogthorpe Road, who, as she wished to proceed to town, wanted, of course, to drive her "any where, any where out of the world." There was light, there was warmth at the station—brilliant gas and a roaring fire in the waiting-room. The clerk was a species of Robinson Crusoe, in a sealskin-cap, who resided in a small hutch surrounded by skirting boards, and who, in the intervals of the arrival and departure of trains, amused himself by cutting out models of Hansom cabs in cardboard. There were two porters, moody and saturnine men, one of whom perpetually studied the time-bill, the proclamations against smoking, and the "awful examples" shown in placards announcing the recent conviction of Keziah Bopps, of Portsea, for travelling without a return ticket, and the fining of Wilhelmina Lightfoot, of Basingstoke, for leaving the train while in motion. As he studied, he whistled a lugubrious melody that began like "Old Dan Tucker," and ended like "The Dead March in Saul." The other porter used habitually to sit on his truck on the platform, inspecting the interior of his bell, as though to find out if it were possible to ring it without agitating the clapper; while the odd boy who ran errands, attended to the newspaper department, and had to be carefully watched lest he should get at the electric telegraph, continually ascertained his own ponderosity by standing on the weighing-machine, and, when he could do it without observation, pasted luggage-labels on the knees of his corduroys. It was

a very dreary little station, but hundreds of times its solitude had been enlivened and its dreariness converted into splendour and gaiety by the guests who had come down to visit Goldthorpe Manor. The flyman had conveyed peers of the realm and foreign ambassadors, when they had missed the Goldthorpe carriages. The gorgeous vehicles last named—barouches, curricles, broughams, dog-carts, *chars à banc*—had gathered by droves at the station door, and towering, powdered, purple-and-yellow footmen had condescended to quaff the mildest of mild ales at the little beershop. The dull platform had been swept by the robes of beautiful women; it had been trodden by statesmen, diplomatists, and millionaires; but where is the use of telling you of the had-beens?—it was silent and deserted now, and there was no one who sought warmth at the waiting-room fire save Mrs. Armytage.

She would have to wait a full hour, the odd boy told her, for the eight p.m. up-train. The moody porter paused in his study of the time-bill, hushed his whistling, and stared vacantly at the visitor. The Robinson Crusoe of a clerk, who had just made a slip with his penknife, and severed two of the spokes of a cab wheel from the axle, opened the sliding panel of his hutch, and angrily bade the odd boy, for a “young limb,” hold his noise. When Robinson Crusoe was not modelling Hansom cabs, or performing his ticket-dispensing duties, he cultivated hollyhocks on the slope of the embankment. He used to envy his brother, who was an agent for coals about a hundred yards beyond the station. He envied the landlord of the beershop. He envied the guards, engine-drivers, and stokers, who were at least con-

tinually going up and down the line. Nature may have fitted him to be a poet, an artist, an orator; stern Fate condemned him to be a station-master. He used to say, like Mariana, that his life was dreary, and that he was a-weary, a-weary. Promotion came not, he said. He did not wish that he was dead, mainly, I think, because he was a full-blooded young fellow, only three-and-twenty years of age, and keenly interested in the eventualities of the next Newmarket meeting.

As there was an hour to wait, and no refreshment-room and no book-stall at the station, Mrs. Armytage found time hang rather heavy on her hands. She got over about five minutes of the sixty by her favourite employment of toasting her little *bottines* at the fire. Then she read all the advertisements, chromo-lithographed and otherwise, which hung framed and glazed on the walls, and wondered what manner of artists they could be who devoted themselves to the composition of cartoons representing gentlemen's hats, boneless corsets, taps for beer-barrels, iron bedsteads, and isometrical views of ginger-beer manufactories at Bermondsey.

Then, what with her two miles' walk, the cold without, the warm fire within, the deathlike stillness, relieved only by the ticking of the waiting-room clock, Mrs. Armytage grew drowsy. Her little head fell gently back, her hands sank down among her drapery, she released her hold of a tract which some pious wellwisher had left on the table, and she sank into a profound sleep.

The tract was solemn, and rather fierce in its solemnity. It was entitled "Where are you going?" and on its title-page was a neat woodcut of a young

woman bearing a basket of flowers, rapidly descending a mountain-path, at whose base was couched a grisly bear. Mrs. Armytage had glanced at the tract with considerable interest just before she went to sleep. She was a well-read little woman, and liked literature for its own sake. "Where are you going?" she repeated, with a tinkling laugh. "Ah, if one could but tell! *Sait on où l'on va?* Didn't Diderot ask the question? Does any one know whither they are going?" and so fell into a slumber.

I declare that she slept as peacefully and as prettily as a baby. Her little lips were just parted, and a brighter glow than ordinaty from the fire would momentarily come and tip her teeth with pellicles of crimson. As she lay back in the chair, her head reclining, the deep shadows were on her forehead and above her cheeks. Her fair throat shone radiant above the lace of her collar; while, enshrined in the trappings of her bonnet, lay, all tumbled and flung back, those waves of golden ringlets. Had the moody porter, or he who pored into the bell, or the Robinson-Crusoe clerk, entered while she so slept, they would have been asses had they not kissed her, whatever might have been the penalty. There was no Aggravated Assaults Act in 1850. She looked so calm, so tranquil, so happy. No shadow of the clouds that sometimes pass over the sea of sleep disturbed her closed lids, with those long lashes trailing gently, like the fringe of some gorgeous drapery that veils a cabinet of gems. She smiled once or twice, meekly, gently, coaxingly enough to melt a man whose heart was triply plated; the beadwork of her mantle just glanced in the light as it rose and fell with the beating of her heart; and a soft sigh stole

from those half-opened lips, as if to reproach the waiting-room clock for its remorseless ticking, and hush it while the fair creature slept.

And so she slept for about twenty minutes; when with a quick, sharp, painful scream, she started up, erect, trembling, fluttering like a bird become suddenly aware of the ruthless hawk above him; first flushed, then pale, almost breathless.

"Hands off!" she cried; "you shan't touch me. I'll go quietly. It isn't—Miss Hill," she continued hurriedly,—“am I dreaming?”

Mrs. Armytage had not been dreaming. Hands had been laid upon her, but with no stern grasp. Only Magdalen Hill, draped from head to foot in her mourning raiment, and with the rime of the night-frost upon her, was there, and had awakened her.

The two women—the girl and the widow—had been acquainted for years; had been at the same balls and feasts; but they had never been alone together until this moment. Mrs. Armytage was evidently flurried; but then you must recollect how suddenly she had been aroused from a comfortable sleep. In less than a minute she was herself again,—shook her ringlets and arranged her dress. She stayed the laugh that was rising to her lips; but, as she eyed Magdalen keenly, she laughed internally, in what sleeve of her soul I am not psychological milliner enough to determine. “The little weasel was very nearly being caught asleep,” thought Mrs. Armytage.

The girl stood looking at her with sad eyes. Remorseful, wistful, well-nigh imploring—not haughty, not full of aversion now.

“Oh, Mrs. Armytage,” she said, in a low pleading

tone, "what is this? What have you told Sir Jasper? He is dreadfully ill. I thought he would die. He had but just recovered consciousness when I started, hearing from the lodge-keeper that you had left, in the endeavour to find you. What terrible business could it have been to bring you to our house at such a time?"

"My dear Miss Hill," asked the widow, "before I answer your question, allow me to ask you another. Is Sir Jasper in danger?"

"I scarcely know," replied Magdalen, in a broken voice. "There was not time. I hurried after you. I rushed into a carriage. Fortunately the house-steward bled him, and Dr. Medley has been sent for."

"I am very sorry, then," interposed Mrs. Armytage; "but I don't see that I have anything more to do with the matter. Had the news I conveyed to Sir Jasper Goldthorpe brought about fatal or even dangerous consequences, no one would have regretted it more than I. As it is, he has just had a fit of syncope, and will get on nicely. As I am neither a village apothecary nor a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, I can't be of any use; and as I am going to London by the 8 p.m. train, you will permit me to remain your most humble servant to command."

So saying, and with a sarcastic laugh which seemed irrepressible, she dropped a very low curtsy, and would have passed out. But Magdalen Hill was determined. She put back Mrs. Armytage with a calm sternness before which the Lady on the First Floor, courageous as she was, could not avoid quailing, and in a tone of resolution, placing herself before the door, she said:—

"Pardon me, madam, you cannot, you shall not,

leave me thus. We have but to consult each our own instinct to know that we are no great friends. It is not through affection for you that I am here. I come through love for my dear dead Hugh; I come through love for my dearest friends and guardians. What has brought you to sow additional sorrow among us, wretched as we are? It is something that concerns poor Hugh's memory, it is something that concerns Sir Jasper; and I ask because I feel that I have a right to know."

"I will not answer one word," quoth Mrs. Armytage, clenching her little hands.

"I entreat, I implore you, then," Magdalen went on, her sternness failing her, and her voice choked with sobs. "Oh, Mrs. Armytage, you cannot be so cruel! Is there any peril that can be averted from Sir Jasper? Is there anything you know of Hugh's last moments that can inflict pain on his relatives, on me, on any one? Oh, speak, I adjure you!"

Mrs. Armytage took from her pocket a little jewelled *bonbonnière*, took out a chocolate *praline*, and began daintily nibbling it.

"The train-bell must ring presently," she remarked, "and you will be compelled to let me go. As it is, you have laid yourself open to an action for assault and false imprisonment. Imagine, 'Armytage v. Hill. Extraordinary case, cross-examination of witnesses.' Ha! ha!"

"If I interposed somewhat abruptly—" Magdalen broke in, apologetically.

"There, there," continued the widow, "no harm is done; you want to be told something that I won't tell you. You thought to frighten me with your Tra-

gedy-queen airs, and now you are fit to cry your eyes out. You are an overgrown school-girl, and I am a woman of the world—a clever woman, you understand. Go, and paint your missals, and leave serious things to men and women of business. What I know, I know; and it is a matter between Sir Jasper Goldthorpe and myself. Be a good girl, and get from before that door. Will you have a *praline*?"

She held out the box of sweetmeats to her rival with a merry, roguish twinkle in her eyes. She was quite at home again. The weasel was thoroughly awake. Poor Magdalen felt very much like a bird in the clutches of a fine silky-furred cat. She was powerless, and dropped her head, and almost involuntarily moved away from the door.

"That is better," laughed Mrs. Armytage. "There's nothing like common sense. Common sense has been worth six thousand a year to me, a poor little Indian widow, with a twopenny-half-penny pension. It was sensible in you to stand away from the door as I bid you; because, if you had not, and for all that you are the grand young lady Miss Magdalen Hill, I would have torn your bonnet off your head and your dress off your back."

What could Magdalen do? How could she cope with this affable tigress? She averted her gaze, and drew herself closely together, as the widow, in all the pride of her rustling skirts, swept onwards.

"A word ere we go," she said, in a hot whisper that almost blistered Magdalen's cheek. "Just now you said, and truly, that we needed but to consult our instincts to know that we were not friends. We are not. We are enemies. I am glad that Hugh was

killed; and had he come home and made you his wife, you cat, I would have poisoned or shot you before ever you sat at his table or lay in his bed. Good-by, and bless you!"

These were the last words of Mrs. Armytage, on that occasion at least, heard at Goldthorpe Station, erst Pogthorpe Road; and with this farewell and benediction she went out into the night, and on to the platform. The moody porters, the clerk who made the models, the boy who weighed himself, all woke up to temporary life and activity as the bell rang out, and the train rattled and screeched into the station. The little platform shook; the people on it drew back, lest they should be sucked into destruction by the monster's breath, and smashed to paste among its whirling wheels. It came out of a deep cutting, and disappeared in a dark tunnel. Green and red lights fitfully shone as it dashed away. The red smoke made lurid the face of the engine-driver, as he stood with arms folded, thoughtful, at his post. From the carriage windows dozens of visages of men and women peered out on to the station; many of them seeing it for the first time, and being seen by those who peopled it for the last time in their lives. So away sped the up-express, carrying its load of loves and hatreds, and hopes and fears, and joys and sorrows; bearing mothers, perchance, as bereaved as she of the House of Mammon was; sons as fair and brave as he who had been slain at Armentières; girls as young and haughty and as loving as Magdalen; foreigners and British men, lisping children and doddering dotards, honest people and foul rogues, Cornelia going to her children and Laïs going to a masked ball, millionaires whose ships have come home,

and bankrupts flying from a fiat—hundreds of patches towards the make-up of that vast motley counterpane we call society; but not, in all its medley company, one woman, I will wager, prettier or wickeder than the lady in black, who tripped with such grace into a first-class *coupé*, and displayed such dainty white drapery to the admiring eyes of the guard.

The train was gone. It had its goal; but whither went its occupants? "Where are you going?" asked the station-room tract. Whither are we all going, and where is the terminus where the last tickets shall be asked for in a Trumpet tone?

The romancer's privilege can assign a destination to two persons who so parted on this January night. Foiled and repulsed, Magdalen Hill wept no more. The hot fire of the waiting-room, the hotter farewell whisper of the widow, had dried her tears for good. "She will tell me nothing," she murmured, "nothing, although I know that she is working fearful evil to me and mine. Heaven grant me strength and patience to watch and pray." The carriage was waiting for her, and, sad and sorrowful, but calm and resigned now, she was borne back to Goldthorpe Manor, where physicians and nurses were bending over an old man very different to the blandly strong man who lorded it in Beryl Court, and who lay now feebly moaning and half unconscious in his great bed of state. A messenger on horseback passed Magdalen, or ever she had cleared the environs of the station. He had been bidden to telegraph to Dr. Sardonix, in London, desiring his immediate attendance. The Doctor was called away from the dinner-table of a rich East Indian Director, who, having quarrelled with most of his friends, and turned

his children out of doors, had adopted a liver complaint as his son, and, indeed, his heir,—for he had made his will in favour of a Special Hospital,—and now got on very well with curry, mulligatawny, and Doctor Sardonix in the evening, and tarraxicum, blue-pill, and Dr. Sardonix in the morning. The Doctor used to remonstrate with the Director; but how could you coerce a man who had sat under the pagoda-tree until a golden apple had dropped on his nose, and imbued him with directorial gravity; who had tossed up heads or tails with Sir Mungo Chutnee, in Leadenhall Street, as to whether the Rajah of Cadmore should be maintained in his sovereignty or deposed, whether the Begum of Boocherabad (vehemently suspected of having boiled her pet dwarf in Macassar oil, specially imported from Europe for the purpose, and buried a nautch girl under a marble pavement, alive) should be prosecuted or pensioned; and who gave away commissions in the Bengal cavalry as though they were soup-tickets? The claret-bell had just rung when one of Sardonix's black-worsted footmen brought him the telegraphic message from his house. He rose in haste, had scarcely time to take his usual after-dinner dose of carbonate of soda in the hall, and was very nearly committing a robbery in a dwelling-house, by cramming one of the Director's damask napkins into his pocket. "I thought so," he said, in a soothing tone, apologising to his host. "Poor dear Sir Jasper! Nerves, my dear sir, nerves. We must be very cautious. We cannot take too much care of ourselves. Such a precious life must be guarded by the minutest precautions." It was Dr. Sardonix's practice, whenever he found it feasible, to pay double-barrelled compliments, or to hit two birds with one

flattering bullet. The Director felt grateful for the allusion to his "precious life," and growled out an expression of admiration as the Doctor took his departure. "Sensible man that," he said, half inclined to put the Doctor in his will by the side of the Hospital for Dyspepsia, but for economy's sake resolving to get the Doctor appointed physician extraordinary to the special establishment in question. "Bobus," he continued to the butler, "now he's gone I won't have claret, I'll have port. The 'tawny' twenty-four, you know: Herringpond's port,—the banker fellow who was hanged. Capital port he had."

Dr. Sardonix paid a whole academy of compliments before he reached Goldthorpe Manor. He asked the butler after his gout, and called that delighted servitor "my good friend." I believe that if the footman had consulted him as to the malady which prevented the calves of his legs from fattening, he would have given him the most friendly advice. He complimented the cabman on the swiftness of his pace, and even presented him with an extra sixpence. "We doctors are hard masters to horseflesh," he sympathetically remarked. The black-worsted footman who accompanied his master to the station had not failed to tell the driver how distinguished a practitioner he was carrying; and the charioteer, could he have mustered up courage, would have begged a prescription for the bronchial affection under which his horse was suffering. The South-Western Railway officials were deeply impressed with a sense of Doctor Sardonix's talents and affability before the special train that he had ordered—no expense was spared when Mammon was sick—could be got ready. The keeper of the book-stall bowed to

him, handed him the third edition of the *Express*, damp with the latest news, and respectfully informed him that the sale of his work, "The curative Properties of stuffed Sweetbread in its Action on the human Pancreas," by E. Mollyent Sardonix, M.D., F.R.S., was going on wonderfully. The guard would have allowed him to smoke like Etna had the Doctor felt so disposed, and numerous hats were lifted as his "special" quitted the terminus. Such homage is due to the princes of science. There are some modest and retiring princes who never get it, and don't want it; but Dr. Sardonix had long since determined that the barque in which he navigated the sea of life should be a golden galley and a pleasure-barge. He greased the ways assiduously at launching, and, with a fair start, the craft went on swimmingly. He had no need to puff himself in print; his natural suavity was far more effective than leaded type. "One compliment is worth a hundred advertisements" was a favourite apophthegm with this astute physician. He has long since got his baronetage; and I have no doubt that the next generation will hear Sardonician orations delivered at the Royal College of Physicians by practitioners as polite as he was.

The special train that took the Doctor down to Goldthorpe passed the ordinary up express, and the illustrious medical man was near enough at one moment to a certain first-class *coupé* to have shaken hands with its occupant had he chosen to run the risk of fracturing his arm in so doing. Mrs. Armytage no more dreamed of the Doctor's proximity, nor the Doctor of Mrs. Armytage's, than you or I when we pass in the street our dearest unknown friend or our bitterest unknown enemy—the woman who would marry us to-morrow were we

to ask her, or the man who would force a dose of strychnine down our throats for twopence. There are human parallel lines which are continued to infinity, and never meet. Mrs. Armytage arrived at Waterloo, quite unconscious as to whom her transient neighbour had been, and comforting herself with a Bath bun—of which she ate little more than the sugared top and the carraway-seeds—and a bottle of lemonade, entered a cab—I am ashamed to say that it was a Hansom—but she was of *so* frolicsome a disposition!—and was driven to the Victoria Hotel, Euston Square. Properly, her palfry with embroidered housings, or her armored litter drawn by *dos arrogantes mulas*, like Gil Blas' uncle, the canon's: with her squire and seneschal and page, should have been waiting for her; but I am writing in a prosaic time, and the characters in my drama must have recourse for their more or less momentous movements to such prosaic modes of conveyance as railways and steamboats, cabs and broughams.

She had brought her bower-maiden, Mademoiselle Reine, with her to London. That young lady detested England and the English; and when not required at her mistress's toilet, sat immured in her bedroom, sipping sugar-and-water, and perusing the charming novels of M. Xavier de Montépin. She was an oral *cabinet de lecture*. The Blenheim spaniel was on duty also, and yowled fractiously at the inferior quality of the London chickens, and the shameful adulteration of the London cream. Moustachu, the *chasseur*, was likewise in attendance. officiating, when Mrs. Armytage travelled, as courier; on which occasions he appeared elaborately got up in a braided pandour jacket lined with silver-

fox skin, a gold laced cap, and a tawny leathern pouch slung round him, containing an assortment of every European coinage. Moustachu had been fearfully seasick in crossing the Channel. He consoled himself with potent draughts of the brown beer of Albion when he landed; and his mistress very nearly caught him smoking a silver-mounted meerschaum at the corner of Seymour Street as her cab drove by.

Nor, finally, was "my man Sims" wanting to complete the train of the Princess who lived in that sumptuous first-floor in Paris yonder. It was, however, Mr. Sims's invariable practice to keep himself in the background. I question if he had even a passport of his own; or passed among Mrs. Armytage's "suite." While the accommodation afforded to Mademoiselle Reine and the Sieur Moustachu heavily contributed to the expansion of the widow's hotel-bill, the modest Sims took up his quarters at a neighbouring coffee-shop, where he dined off saltpetred bacon and boiled tea-leaves, read papers five days old, played draughts with a contemplative signalman from the station over the way, and was regarded by the landlord as a quiet party from the manufacturing districts, who was seeking for a situation as a clerk in a London house. If I had committed a murder and wished to avoid detection, I would hide in a coffee-shop close to a railway station. Pay as you go, and nobody will take any notice of you, save perhaps to remark to you how strange it is that the detectives haven't captured that sanguinary villain Slaughterford yet.

Mrs. Armytage was very well known and highly respected at the hotel. Faithful to her taste for a first-floor, she always had a suite of apartments one story

high, and retained a brougham while staying in town. Her little malachite card-basket was on the drawing-table, and when she returned it was full of scented and heraldically emblazoned cards. The announcement, "At the Victoria Hotel, Euston Square:—Mrs. Armytage and suite," met her eyes among the "fashionable arrivals" in the *Post*. Sims had seen to that. Sims was in attendance, having been fetched by Moustachu from the coffee-shop. "*Quoi de nouveau?*" the lady carelessly asked of Mr. Sims in French, for a waiter was present solemnly lighting a galaxy of wax candles. Darkness was the only thing that made Mrs. Armytage nervous.

"*Il fait gros temps dans la chiourme,*" enigmatically replied Mr. Sims. "*Madame attendra que ce butor soit parti.*"

The solemn lamp-lighter spoken of so uncomplimentarily as a "*butor*," a blockhead, having taken his departure, Mr. Sims, as was his wont when conferring alone with his patroness, lightly turned the key in the door.

"What is it?" Mrs. Armytage asked, speaking very rapidly, and a feverish flush rising to her cheeks.

"Bad as bad can be. The reddest of red lamps. Total, dangerous. Prospect, smash."

"Don't torture me. Go on."

"Saddington and Dedwards."

"Well!"

"Won't renew.—Whittle and Gumtickler."

"Well!"

"Have had the two five hundreds returned from New Orleans. Furious, but don't suspect any thing."

"Any thing else?" Mrs. Armytage's foot was drumming on the carpet, and her fingers were twitching at her dress.

"Something to tickle your fancy, as the valentines say. Ephraim Tigg of Stockwell."

"What of him?"

"Ephraim Tigg of Stockwell," slowly and quietly continued Mr. Sims:—he had been reading the names just quoted from a scrap of paper, taken from a greasy pocket-book, and now carefully closed it, strapped it up, and replaced it in his pocket—"Ephraim Tigg of Stockwell is a Rasper."

"Go on, go on; I shall lose my wits."

"Ephraim Tigg *knows all about it, and won't wait*. He found the counterfoil; you must have been silly to leave *that*."

A piercing scream was rising to the pretty woman's lips; but she checked herself, biting her lips till the blood came. Then she started up, shaking her yellow hair about her like a Fury, and wringing her hands.

"I am ruined, I am ruined!" she panted out. "Why did I ever go near that horrible old man? I have never lost sight of his white face and red eyelids. He has haunted me for days. The others are nothing. Fool that I was not to get the money from Goldthorpe before I struck him down: to-morrow may be too late. O Sims, Sims, help me; what am I to do?"

I know that what I am going to relate is exceedingly improbable; but it is true, nevertheless, that the brilliant widow of the Rue Grande-des-Petites-Maisons, with starting eyes, with swollen veins, with dishevelled hair, threw herself on her knees before the modest Mr. Sims, who lived at a coffee-shop, who had a face like

a ferret, and whose nose was not only peaked but purple at the ends.*

"Mercy, mercy!" she repeated, in scarce articulate accents. It was well that the door was fastened. The solemn torch-bearing waiter would have been scandalised; but an artist would have rejoiced in the disordered folds of her drapery, spread over the carpet; in her attitude of despairing supplication. She was not acting. Her laughing mask was thrown aside; real grief and terror raged beneath. She might, for her wild and scared looks, have been a Helen, remembering that the woes of Troy were due alone to her, that she was growing old, and that Paris had frowned upon her. She might have been a Brinvilliers, with all her wiles detected, and the *lieutenant criminel*, with his exempts, thundering at the door.

"Get up," was the unceremonious response made by Mr. Sims to the impassioned appeal made to him. "For laughing like a Cheshire cat, and going on your knees like Ada the Outcast, I never did see your equal. What's the good of play-acting to me?"

"I'm not acting," groaned Mrs. Armytage. I have said as much for her already.

"Well, get up, at all events," Mr. Sims continued. "For such a plucky one as you generally are, you do

* "It is scarcely possible to quit this horrid subject without observing that the facts which have now been demonstrated were in the highest degree improbable. Who could have believed that two wretches of the ages of fifteen and sixteen years could have continued Let us not, then, too hastily conclude on other occasions that what does not appear probable is necessarily false, nor rashly reject every proposition for which we cannot fully account. Let our inquiry be cool, critical, and deliberate; but as evils multiply beyond probability, let our vigilance be not only constant but scrupulous, not resting on slight appearance, but passing on to facts."—EDMUND BURKE *on a celebrated Criminal Case*, A. D. 1767.

break down shamefully sudden sometimes. You'll show the white feather at the C. C. C. some of these days, if you don't take care. Think of your dignity. There's nothing like dignity; and the shorter you are, the more dignified you ought to be. I'm too old for it, and always liked a quiet life; but you're just young enough to dignify yourself into a coronet."

Mrs. Armytage no longer knelt; she sat rather in the midst of the carpet, looking up with a strange expression of mingled fear and curiosity in Mr. Sims's face.

"Is there any hope?" she asked.

"To be sure there is," replied Sims. "Every thing's as right as can be."

She arose radiant, but trembling. She summoned up her laugh, but it died away in a fitful gasp, and she had to place her hand on her labouring heart.

"Why did you frighten me?" she said, in broken tones. "I have been in tortures, in agony."

"To let you know what an excellent friend you can always reckon upon in an emergency, and may reckon on if you only follow his advice. Ephraim Tigg and I have done business for years in all sorts of things, from lottery-tickets to the lead off roofs. He daren't squeak; but he *would* have squeaked but for me. You went to him without my sanction, and you see the scrape you have nearly got yourself into. The money was a mere fleabite, a miserable fifty. But your confounded imprudence has nearly knocked down your palace, just as if it had been made of cards. At your time of life, too, and after all the experience you have had, you really ought to know better, ma'am."

There was nothing openly disrespectful in Mr.

Sims's tone, even when he had used his rudest words of expostulation. He spoke calmly and quietly, as though he were despatching a matter of business, such as conferring about a schedule with an insolvent, and a schedule concerning which it was necessary to speak without disguise. And so soon as Mrs. Armytage had reached a sofa, and had sunk down upon its luxurious cushions, the normal state of things between mistress and man seemed of itself to return: Mr. Sims addressing her with his customary deference, and she treating him with her usual familiar disdain. The little Blenheim spaniel on the hearthrug, who had perhaps been dreaming of pullet prepared in the superior Parisian fashion, woke up when his mistress, on her knees, was adjuring Sims. He yelped peevishly; but no notice being taken of his complaints, turned himself round, like a sensible dog, and went to sleep again. This was by no means the first scene in which Mrs. Armytage had figured as an actress, and at which Mouche the Blenheim had assisted. Matters assuming a more cheerful aspect, he leapt up to his mistress's lap, and took her caresses with much complacency.

"And how," demanded Mrs. Armytage gaily, and toying with the dog,—“how did you manage it all, my good faithful Sims? Stay, you are sure there is no one at the door.”

“Unless walls have ears,” was the answer, “we are unheard. There are some fools who, when they lock a door, put the key in their pocket. Always leave it inside. Nobody can look through the keyhole then.”

“You are wondrous wise, Sims, but tiresome. Proceed, my excellent agent.”

“I sha'n't take you long. Saddington and Ded-

wards must have the diamonds; you can't wear them. It's a bad moment for selling, though. We've glutted too many markets already, and another sale might bring on a stoppage of the firm of Armytage and Co. Besides, you have jewels enough already to cover the Queen of Sheba."

"Let the diamonds go! I don't like to part with them: those nice glittering things are so compact, tell such few tales, and sew up so neatly in one's dress. For a rainy day, at the North Pole or at the Tropics, there's no umbrella so good as a diamond."

"It's a pity you can't keep these; but the figure is heavy. Whittle and Gumtickle could have done nothing but sue. Had Somebody been alive at New Orleans, it might have been a different matter. Fortunately, a champagne supper and the yellow fever—only thirty-six hours—kept your secret for you."

Mrs. Armytage just raised her eyes, and her hand rested for a moment immobile on the silken head of the dog.

"Dead?" she rather looked than spoke as she made the inquiry.

"Dead as mutton," echoed Mr. Sims; "our dear brother departed, and so on. He left a good crop of debts behind him, and a large family."

"Poor Bellasis!" mused the widow. "He was always too fond of champagne, and *would* take the miss at loo." And she went on playing with Mouche.

"Ephraim Tigg," went on Mr. Sims, "was the worst. As I told you, he is a Rasper."

"What is a rasper?" asked the widow, elevating her eyebrows.

"You would be one if you had only a little more

decision. He vowed vengeance, and was going to do all sorts of things. But for some little business transactions of old date between us, when my name was Des—" he checked himself—"when it wasn't Sims, Ephraim might have done all he threatened. But I paid him. I burnt the ugly bit of paper, and there's an end of that business. But he knows what he ought not to know, ma'am, and that's a red lamp as big as a pumpkin."

"Is he a man to kill, to gain over, or to tell lies to? and what should be done to prevent him annoying us?"

"He is a man," remarked Mr. Sims, with much calmness, "to die. He is a man to have another paralytic stroke. He's had one, and I think the next will be pretty nearly his good-bye to stamped paper. He's got just about strength enough to creep into a witness-box, and that's all. He's got a hundred thousand pounds, lives in a kitchen, and feeds on the rats and blackbeetles that swarm in it, I think. I never did see such an old atomy. No; there's nothing to be feared from him, unless"—he paused in his speech, and spoke very slowly and deliberately—"unless you've been making him any more morning calls, ma'am."

"On my honour, no!" asseverated Mrs. Armytage, turning nervously among her cushions. "I never saw the old brute but once, and never wish to see him again."

"Then you can go to bed and sleep comfortably on your honour. Do you want me any more to-night? I think I shall go to the play."

"*You* go to the play!" repeated his patroness, in some astonishment. "Why, you don't go once in six

months. What on earth has put that into your head?"

"Well, I like theatricals," Mr. Sims explained, slowly rubbing his hands together. "They're warm, and bright, and cheap; and you can let the people on the stage talk away without bothering yourself. Then you can look at the people in the boxes; and you're so close-seated in the pit, that you can't well help hearing all that your neighbours have got to say among themselves. Oh, I like the play! I used to be fond of going to chapel; but it's the audience there who are acting, and you can't tell what they are really up to."

"I think I know where you would like to be much better, Sims," his mistress observed, with good-humoured contempt. "What a pity there is no hazard left, no roulette, no rouge-et-noir!"

Mr. Sims shrugged his shoulders, and was silent; but a tiny red spot on either cheek showed that the widow's lance had hit home.

"Well, go to the play, most virtuous Sims," Mrs. Armytage resumed, with a slight yawn. "If you want any thing to drink, they will give it you downstairs. Please come to me very early in the morning, and send Reine to me."

She waved her hand in gracious dismissal, and Mr. Sims, with a jerk that may have been meant for a bow, turned on his heel, unlocked the door, and departed. He walked gingerly along the richly carpeted corridor of the hotel, stopping ever and anon before some particular door, and studying the number with a look of owl-like wisdom. He also meditated for full three minutes before a vast pyramid of bedroom candles, and meeting a pretty chambermaid bade her good

night in a fatherly manner. To the waiter, whose life seemed to be passed in torch-bearing, and who was just lighting up a county magistrate in a private room, he imparted his lady's behests; and as the bells began to ring for somebody to tell somebody that number eleven's maid was wanted, Mr. Sims stepped into Euston Square.

"A clever woman, but rash, and cannot resist her impulses," he soliloquised,—“her One impulse, at least. That is irresistible, and will be the ruin of her. Who can overcome one's little fancy? I can't. With proper management that woman ought to be a Russian arch-duchess, at least; but she'll end badly, I fear, all through impulse.”

He was decidedly the most retiring and least ostentatious of mankind, Mr. Sims. He walked all the way from Euston Square, through Covent Garden, to the Strand, and was positively not above supping off a dozen oysters at a stall beneath the pillars of Clement's Inn. Then, after a sober libation of stout, he resumed his walk westward.

“No hazard left!” he thought. “No hazard, eh? not a tiny nook and corner where a gentleman from the Continent can sport a fifty? Well, we'll have a try.”

Mr. Sims went to the play, but he passed both the Haymarket and Adelphi theatres without availing himself of the privileges of half-price. Where he went to, what play he saw, and in how many acts, and who were the players, it is no business of mine to inquire.

The lady's-maid came, disrobed her mistress, and went back to long-protracted vigils of sugar-and-water

and M. Xavier de Montépin. Mrs. Armytage did not read; but it was late ere she sought her couch in the adjoining bed-chamber. They brought her a little *carafon* of Maraschino, and she sipped a tiny glassful now and then. She had drawn an easy chair to the fire, and wrapped in her China silk *peignoir* had got to her old trick of toasting her little feet at the fire. There were no *bottines* to toast now, and the little feet, covered with a film of open worked silk, looked ravishing in the morocco slippers.

"It is a hard life," she said to herself. "A convict, or a minister of state, can't be much harder worked. It is all sowing and ploughing, and harrowing, and weeding, and what will the harvest be? Do I shrink? do I falter? am I afraid? No; but the life is very wearisome. It makes my head ache. It makes my heart ache. I suppose I have a heart as well as other people. I know I feel it more than other people do, and that I shall die some day of palpitation, or aneurism, or something. Heigho! heigho!"

The little dog, snoozling on the hearthrug, lifted up his blinking eyes, as though in surprise at the unwonted sounds. Screams and laughter he was accustomed to—but sighs!

"Down, Mouche," his mistress cried pettishly, as though offended that the animal had heard her. "What was it that the stupid tract said at the railway?" she went on cogitating. "'Where are you going?' Do the good people know where they are going? I should like to be good, but I can't. I used to scream, 'I will be good! I will be good!' as a child, when they punished me; but I never could be good when the smart was over. I suppose it isn't in me. There *must*

be some pleasure, though, in being able to sleep without horrid dreams, in being able to walk without looking over one's shoulder every five minutes. Good people pray. Where is the good of my praying? Will the words of a prayer help me? My thoughts used to wander away from the words of the service at church. What am I to do, where am I going, and where am I to go?"

She uttered these words against her wicked will, and aloud. The innermost voice had started up unbidden, and overwhelmed her with the imperious suddenness of its summons. It was not a still small voice—the creeping uneasiness of conscience:—that had been stifled long ago. No; this was a sharp, harsh cry. It seemed as though her name were pronounced close to her,—as if some one said, "Florence Armytage, Florence Armytage, where are you going?"

Among the trinkets and the gold-bedizened scent-bottles of her dressing-case, in the next room, was a little crystal phial, carefully stoppered, and half-full of a dark liquid. She opened it, and, holding it from her, allowed its vapid odour to exhale.

"But a little courage, and it would all be over. Bah! 'tis an idiot's resource to kill oneself. I may win the *grand coup*, and leave this life. But that isn't it. I haven't the courage."

She never lied to herself; she was too clever.

"Why can't I cry?" she exclaimed passionately, looking at herself as in the mirror at Paris. "Why can't I squeeze a few tears out? I never could. That white-faced puss at Goldthorpe can whine and sob. I can't even weep when I think of Hugh. Am I to begin to learn whimpering now?"

She had yet some little business to go through ere she sought her bed. From a secret drawer in her jewel-case she took a common red penny memorandum-book and opened it. The columns were full of figures in English and foreign moneys. These she dwelt long over. Then she turned to another page with writing on it.

"Amiens, St. Lazare, La Bourbe, Nice, Preston, Philadelphia, Kilmainham, Kirkdale, Lewes, Manheim, Milan: a pretty catalogue!" she said, with a bitter smile. "Ah, I have been a great traveller. Where is the journey to end?"

Once more, as though dreading to go to rest, she went from her sleeping to her sitting room, took writing materials, and, sitting down, penned a long letter on foreign post paper. She carefully folded it, gummed the envelope all round, sealed it, and addressed it thus:

"Dominique Cosson,
Frère laïque,
Aux Pères Maristes des Bonnes-Œuvres,
Hoogendracht (près Louvain),
Brabant,
Belgique."

"Sims must post this the first thing in the morning," she said almost gaily, as she rose from her seat. And then for the second time I leave her to her bed, and to Sleep, which comes alike to the evil and the just, to the criminal in his cell and the anchorite on his pallet, and covers all over with the Death that is in the midst of Life.

CHAPTER VIII.

Shepherd and Sheep.

SIXTEEN months had passed, and crazy fanatics who had predicted the end of the world before the year was out—not forgetting to take houses at long leases meanwhile—found for the thousandth time that their reckoning was confusion, and that their prophecies were wind. The old world went on, and men children were born to supply the loss of those who had been taken away; and kings and cadgers alike gave up the ghost; and Death as usual met the wedding guest on the threshold, and with unvarying politeness bade him pass in first, as there would be plenty of time for him.

It was the merry month of May of the year eighteen fifty-one, and London was in a frenzy about the Great Exhibition. The glass-house in Hyde Park has, directly, nothing to do with the conduct of this story; and you will hear little about it from me. But the influence of the fever that raged in London was felt in the remotest portions of the English provinces. A gadding-about mania seized on all ranks and conditions of men. Women went up in droves to London professedly to see the Exhibition—actually to stare at the dresses and bonnets in the shop windows. Ancient hedgers and ditchers who were scarcely yet familiar with the high street of their market town, were put into clean smock-frocks, and paraded by their pastors through the giant metropolis, and the wonderful structure in the park. The very paupers in rural work-houses were dressed in their best, taken to town, permitted to croon forth feeble notes of admiration in

nave and transept, and were regaled with unwonted meat and beer. Some such kindly feelings from the rich towards the poor are generally brought forth by great public festivals. He who has all is even anxious to let him who has nothing share—in the infinitesimal degrees. Exclusive possession palls. If Flag gets a couple of thousand pounds as prize-money, he flings fourteenth-class half-a-crown as *his* portion. A man who has a blue diamond, or a cabinet full of Rafaelles, is frequently most liberal in permitting the gratuitous inspection of his treasures.

It has been said that the Great Exhibition made itself felt all over the land. The press and the post-office between them distributed hundreds of thousands of journals teeming with woodcuts, and glowing with descriptions of the rare contents of Paxton's Palace. Every rustic Paul who found himself in London wrote letters to his kinsfolk. The humours of the Great Exhibition and "Lunnon town" were put into the Lancashire dialect, and chanted by the descendants of those Troubadours, of whom Tim Bobbin was the Blondel. Somersetshire, Westmoreland, Yorkshire, Northumbria had ballads in their vernacular about the great carnival of industry in the capital—ballads which would have delighted Prince Lucien Solomon Bonaparte. This was the time when lads ran away from home to seek their fortune, and expecting to find London paved with gold, discovered that pockets might be so lined, but that the streets themselves were jagged and muddy; and so, Bow Bells seeming to chime out more to the effect that they were fools for their pains, than to bid them turn again and be Lords Mayor of London, betook themselves to their homes, and were

feasted on the fatted calf, or the cold shoulder, as the case might be. It was in all respects—you, who remember it, will agree with me—an exceptional year. Gentlemen fell in love at first sight, not in three-volume novels, but in actual reality, with young ladies they met in railway carriages, or at Osler's Crystal Fountain, and married them out of hand. Freemasons from Mount Atlas fraternised with Freemasons from Primrose Hill, and the Polish Lodge entertained a Babel of foreign brethren. The oldest *habitués* of the Park and the Opera were forced to confess that they saw daily and nightly in Rotten Row and the Halls amazons and amateurs with whose faces they were not familiar; and the learned in social statistics ascertained for a fact, that from May to September—such was the mollifying effect of the season—vast numbers of born and well-born Englishmen and Englishwomen made no scruple of conversing with persons to whom they had never been formally introduced.

But, as in the midst of a railway loopline, or between its parallels, or midway between its horns, you shall find some hamlet—some small country town sometimes—which has no station, no omnibus nor fly communication, no gas, no police, and no roads much better than bridle-paths, and which is, to all intents and purposes of civilisation, five hundred years behind the age; so down in the county of Kent was there a village whose inhabitants did not trouble themselves in the slightest degree about the Great Exhibition—and many of them had but a very hazy and uncertain knowledge of what an exhibition was—at all.

This place was called Swordsley; and the rector of Swordsley was the Reverend Ernest Goldthorpe. The

village was of some size, its population numbering nearly nine hundred. It was not a specially ignorant or uncouth village; it was simply indifferent to all that went on out of its precincts. If a Swordsley man had designed the House of Fame in Hyde Park, or the heir of the lord of the manor of Swordsley—who was a Captain in the Guards—had been sent to the House of Correction for assaulting a policeman in Rotten Row, the villagers might have taken some interest in the World's Fair. As it was, none of those in whom they interested themselves had anything to do with it; so they left the Great Exhibition to its own devices.

To the inhabitants of this tranquil place the world was bounded by the limits of Swordsley parish. The ancient cathedral town of St. Becketsbury was not very far distant,—scarce ten miles, in fact; but that was a matter concerning the rector and his curate, and not the laymen of Swordsley. There was a station at Daiseybridge, four miles distant, belonging to the South-Eastern Railway, and the aristocracy of Swordsley might avail themselves of it; but the Swordsleians were profoundly indifferent and all but unconscious of the existence of such things as trains and locomotives. An early village bard had made a satirical song, in days gone by, against the railway movement generally, deriding it as a newfangled invention, and lampooning it as a “Long Tom's Coffin,”—a hit which told immensely, more for the sound of the phrase than for its actual signification. When a Swordsley man was pressed to accede to a branch line from Daiseybridge through Swordsley, and so on to the little seaport of Shrimpington-super-Mare, he ordinarily made answer, “We want none of your Long Tom Coffins hereabouts,”

and was supposed thereafter to have irretrievably demolished his adversary. A sharp lawyer from St. Becketsbury once threatened the intractable villagers with an Act of Parliament which should compel them to have either a railway, or gas or water pipes, or some other filaments of the crinoline of civilisation; but Chuff the saddler, who was the village oracle, and the "Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood" of Swordsley, cried, "Let un try it. I'll Parliament House un. I'll sow their Acts up like so much pig-skin." And it was universally believed (in Swordsley) that any attempt on the part of the Legislature to coerce Swordsley into light, or cleanliness, or activity, would be met by the erection of barricades, and the invocation of the Patron of battles.

There was a society, less convivial than conservative and inquisitorial, held at the "Old Dun Horse" tavern, called "The Leave-us-alone Club," in Swordsley. It was particularly active in suppressing new-fangled inventions. It was stanchly Protectionist, had burnt Peel and Cobden in effigy, and debated the propriety of presenting a silver pitchfork to the once illustrious, but now forgotten, champion of costly corn—Chowler. The St. Becketsbury lawyer, aided by one or two incendiaries among the neighbouring gentry—for at Swordsley, and not for the first time since the Creation, it was the patricians who were strong liberals, and the yeomen and peasantry who were bigoted Tories—had actually got a Bill affecting Swordsley sufficiently into work as to have complied with the standing orders of the House. There was an indignation meeting among the villagers, and a secret sederunt of the "Leave-us-alone Club," who, from their own funds,

despatched a deputation, consisting of Chuff the saddler, Muggeridge, mine host of the "Old Dun Horse," and Scrase the corn-chandler, to London, with strict injunctions to spare neither labour, expense, nor physical force—even to the "punching" of the St. Becketsbury lawyer's head—to defeat the abhorred measure. The Bill came to nothing, which was a triumph to Swordsley; but the end of the deputation was curious. The delegates were absent a long time, and wrote more than once for remittances to the Club. Muggeridge informed Mr. Pearkleborough the grocer (chairman *pro tem.* of the "Leave-us-alones") that parliament business was terribly dry work. On his return he evinced a remarkable taciturnity, merely deigning to observe occassionally that the deputation had had "awful times of it;" and the face of Mrs. Muggeridge, his spouse, should properly have been as flat as the countenance of a Kalmuck, for, as she informed Miss Chuff, the saddler's daughter, Muggeridge was in the practice, when spoken to, of biting her nose off from morning till night. There was a dreadful to-do about auditing the account, and the examiners objecting to an item of nine pounds for "sundries," Mr. Muggeridge offered to fight the committee all round (four being a *quorum*); and as the host of the "Old Dun Horse" was a notoriously hard hitter, the auditors perpended and passed his account. Two members of the deputation remained for a considerable period unaccounted for, which necessitated the sending of fresh envoys to the capital in search of them. Chuff the saddler was discovered at an hotel in Old Palace Yard, reduced by a reckless course of hot suppers and heavy lunches to a state of semi-idiotcy. He was rapidly

being converted to liberalism by an unscrupulous attorney's clerk who used the coffee-room; but was rescued by his friends just in time to save his political principles and discharge his bill before it grew too heavy to be paid anyhow.

The catastrophe which overtook the third delegate, Scrase the corn-chandler, was even more tragic. Scrase was a vain old fellow, of a bilio-sanguineous temperament, and was a continual butt for the shafts of Love. The wretched man had the folly to propose marriage to a lady who sang comic duets at an East-end coffee-room with a negro vocalist, who said that he came from Alabama, but who sprang in reality from Agar Town. Love, harmony, and Jamaica rum were his ruin. The great breach-of-promise case of De la Quaverdille (otherwise Siphkins) *versus* Scrase must be fresh in the recollection of my middle-aged readers. Hellogabalus Jones, Q.C., was for the plaintiff. Wumpkins, Q.C., made nothing of the defence. The judge—he was a joking judge, and his father had been a hanging judge—riddled Scrase with witticisms upon his love-letters. The jury gave swingeing damages. Scrase was hooted by the populace, and pursued to a cab by those infuriated females with umbrellas, who always seem ready to enact gratuitously the part of out-door Nemesises to the courts of justice. Scrase sold his business, paid the damages and costs, and retired in dudgeon to St. Becketsbury, where he set up as a stationer, dealt in cheap literature, and became the most rampant of radicals. His former comrades sorrowed sternly over the defection of this Erastian. His name was erased from the club-book,—to add to his crimes, he had left three half-years' subscription unpaid,—and

over his portrait (painted by Spillmegelp, author of the restorations in the sign of the "Old Dun Horse") was wafered a copy of *Bell's Weekly Messenger*. Unconsciously, the Leave-us-alones followed the example of the Venetian counsellors, who hung the black veil over the picture of Marino Faliero.

It was to wrestle with these somewhat obstinate and prejudiced, albeit very worthy people, that the Reverend Ernest Goldthorpe came to Swordsley. The living was a handsome one, certainly: that was something; but had Ernest not been an upright and conscientious man, anxious and determined to do his duty in his state of life, the first month of his residence in Swordsley would have disgusted him with his preferment, and he would have left the place to a curate, and only regarded it as a milch-cow. The Reverend Ernest Goldthorpe took a different view of his obligations. He would fertilise, he thought, this intellectual desert; he would clear away all this tangled jungle of bigotry and prejudice. So, axe in hand, he walked into the wilderness, and began to lay about him lustily. He was not unpopular at first. The former rector had been deaf, paralytic, and all but blind. There had been a curate who stammered, a curate who couldn't pronounce his H's—the Swordsley men, although they had a pretty broad dialect of their own, were vastly critical as to cockneyisms,—and a curate with a red head—all abominations in the sight of Swordsley. Ernest at first made himself liked. He preached eloquently; he visited the sick sedulously; he kept port wine in his cellar much more for the poor and ailing than for himself; and on Sundays, after morning service, he would give his arm to some fair parishioner,

and, arrayed in his gown and bands, conduct her through the churchyard. The Swordsley people were pleased at this. "I like to see a parson in his cassock—it shows he knows his station," was the sage observation made by Mr. Pearkleborough the grocer. As for Ernest's liberality, the villagers did not care much about his open purse. They were very well to do. They had scarcely any paupers; and the infirm were mostly provided for by their relatives, or in the ancient almshouses of the Battle-axe Makers' Company. Many bed-ridden octogenarians turned up their noses at the rector's port wine; and as for the flannel petticoats which his housekeeper made for them, they preferred their own hooded cloaks, dyed in grain. The neighbouring farmers, who had been totally ruined at intervals during the half-century, were generally very wealthy; and "purse-proud Swordsley" was a by-word to the countryside.

It was an evil hour for Ernest Goldthorpe, so far as his professional peace of mind was concerned, when he became by his brother's lamented death heir to the title and the vast treasures of Mammon. When the season of mourning was drawing to a close, the gentry of the vicinity made a point of offering him their more than tacit congratulations. A rector already passing rich, and who in all human probability would be a baronet and a millionaire, was not a person to be slighted. The great country families called assiduously on the incumbent of Swordsley. He was unmarried, and the fact of how eligible a match he was did not escape the notice of numerous wary mammas. But in proportion as the consideration in which he was held among those of his own degree increased,

so did it decline and diminish among his immediate parishioners. They began to sneer at his bounty as ostentation, to stigmatise his shy and reserved demeanour as pride. The surest way of making a shy man proud is to tell him of his haughtiness. By somewhat of the feeling, *si vult decipi, decipiatur*, one feels inclined, in sheer retaliation, to become distant and austere. The gulf between the rector and his flock widened every day; and it wanted but one element of discord to make it impassable. The men and, worse than all, the women of Swordsley began to take exception to the Reverend Ernest Goldthorpe's doctrine. The unlucky young man had a taste for mediæval art, and he held notions somewhat advanced of the kind advocated in certain famous Tracts for certain troubled Times. If he was not a Puseyite, at least his congregation declared he was one; and he did a good deal towards encouraging the belief. At his own expense he had done much towards restoring the fine old early English church of St. Mary-la-Douce, at Swordsley; but the clearing away of the hideous wainscoating flaming with the golden names of departed churchwardens, and the rubbing off the smearing of white-wash which concealed some fine old fresco paintings,—both parts of the process by which the church had been “beautified” during the Georgian era,—involved him in unseemly broils with his own churchwarden, and caused him to be denounced by the “Leave-us-alone Club” as a pervert, an Escobar, an Ignatius Loyola, who was moved by the horrid intention of once more inflicting Popery, brass money, and wooden shoes on this free and Protestant land. Presuming to decorate the church with evergreens at Easter and

Whitsuntide as well as at Christmas time, his harmless horticulture raised a shout about pagan idolatry and popish mummeries. He preached in a surplice, whereupon Pearkleborough the grocer positively wrote, and had printed at St. Becketsbury and circulated at his own expense, an eight-page pamphlet, headed "The Wolf in the Fold." It commenced with "Remember the Smithfield fires," and ended with the quotation from King John about Italian priests tithing and tolling in the English dominions. Ernest had spent much more in Swordsley than he had ever got out of it; but no account was taken of that. Finally, he put the climax to his offences in the eyes of his parishioners by presenting one of the Sunday-school children with a prize in the shape of a church-service, on which was embossed a cross in crimson morocco. It was about this time that the vestry wrote to the bishop about Ernest's proceedings—his "shameful goings on," as they were termed in Swordsley. They likewise memorialised the Battle-axe Makers' Company; and Chuff threatened the rector that "some of these fine mornings he would have him in the privy council." I have not dwelt on the commotion raised when Ernest took eight little boys from frightening birds and picking up stones in the fields, arrayed them in little white night-gowns worn over their clothes, taught them the Gregorian chant, and called them his choristers. Less need also is there to mention the rumour that he had set up the tribunal of Penitence in his back parlour, and that by dint of strong cordials and pecuniary gratifications, he had induced old Biddy Cubley, the habitually inebriated washerwoman of the village, to confess her manifold sins and do penance.

It may thus be imagined, when this state of things is borne in mind, that the inhabitants of Swordsley had quite enough to do in the month of May, 1851, without troubling themselves about the Great Exhibition. The very few comments that were bestowed upon it generally concurred in the opinion that Exhibitions were a dangerous encouragement to foreigners, and a consequent upholding of papistry. The *odium theologicum* against Ernest alone was sufficient to engross all the evil passions of the little community; their better sympathies were, I trust, reserved for their relations and friends. What slight surplus of hatred there remained was liberally bestowed, in fee simple, upon Miss Magdalen Hill, who, desirous of being near her almost kinsman Ernest, had for the last six months resided at the old mansion-house, known as "The Casements," not half a mile from Swordsley on the St. Becketsbury Road. The Casements, which was said to have fifty-two windows, named each after a popish saint, which had been the hiding-place of one of the Gunpowder-Plot conspirators, which had stood a siege (for the king) during the civil wars, and was said to be triply haunted, through an agreeable series of assassinations which had occurred there,—this old Elizabethan brick-house, with stone gables and quaint terraces and complicated carvings, belonged to Lady Talmash. There was no mistake about Lady Talmash's theological views. She was of the very highest church, and very, very old, and very arbitrary, and very active, and one of Ernest Goldthorpe's most influential supporters. She had known Magdalen from a child, and regarded the young woman with a sincere affection. My lady was a widow, and wealthy. Before Magdalen

had come to cheer her solitude, she had had no other companions save a High-Church parrot,—which had been taught to scream “Canting-Roundheads,” and “wicked old Pope,” with much distinctness of utterance and acrimony of tone,—a rigid old lady’s maid, and her own temper, which was of a somewhat hot and intolerant nature. Lady Talmash was only too glad to have Magdalen near her. The girl was rich in her own right, and knew that she could not be looked upon as a dependent. Above all, she was near her adopted brother’s church and flock, and persuaded herself that she could find congenial and useful employment for herself within Ernest’s sphere of action.

Magdalen was very pale and thin,—much thinner and paler since the awful day when the news came from Armentières,—and her eyes had a strange look; but to most men she seemed eminently beautiful; and, although the other sex would rarely admit her good looks, they were generally unanimous in being jealous of her. What did she want, they asked, in Swordsley? She had lost one husband among the Sons of Mammon; was she seeking a new one in the heir to the title and the riches? If Ernest Goldthorpe wanted a wife, and if he disdained to seek a partner among the ancient county gentry of Kent, he could surely find one among his fine friends in London. Everybody knew that Magdalen was sensible and good; but the knowledge of her many excellent qualities rather embittered the feeling against her than otherwise. Had she been perfect, she would not have escaped censure; but it was a point in favour of her detractors that she missed perfection by one fatal failing—the weak pinion in the wings of the fallen angels: Pride. Ernest was

merely shy; Magdalen was really proud. The settled melancholy which had come upon her since the death of her affianced husband rendered her even more frigid and repellent. She had been sarcastic; she was so no more, but silent and preoccupied. The girls who came to The Casements when, as rarely happened, Lady Talmash gave a party, or who returned the old lady's visits, could find nothing to talk about with Magdalen Hill. They dared not prattle about fashions and flounces to her. It was known that she held balls, operas, and flirtations to be sinful. They could not talk to her about the Early Fathers, about the Council of Trent, or German art or Gothic architecture. Not that her hose was in the slightest degree tinged with blue. She knew much theoretically and practically; but with men who could converse with her on letters or on art she disdained to interchange information or ideas. Even Ernest, who, enthusiast as he was on High Church and mediæval revivalism, was not devoid of a certain amount of timidity, was half afraid of the beautiful sister-in-law that should have been. You see that one can be afraid of other things besides ghosts or dragons; and to the strongest mind it might be unpleasant to sit up all night in a sculpture gallery, with the moonbeams glancing on Pallas Athenè's marble figure. Magdalen seldom went to the rectory; but she ruled the rector's domain, both there and in the church. She gave audience at The Casements to stainers of glass windows, to carvers of rood-screens and bench-ends, to embroiderers of altar-cloths, to makers of brass sconces and emblazoned candles. To her was due the episcopal Faculty which permitted the erection in the chancel of St. Mary-la-Couce, of a magnificent

memorial, in the form of a window, to Captain Hugh Jasper Goldthorpe, deceased. She controlled the discipline of the Reverend Ernest's own proprietary schools; punished or rewarded the children as she liked,—much to the discontent of the schoolmaster and mistress,—and deluged the school library with little mediævalising tracts about Saxon saints and Cappadocian martyrs. In the Sunday-school the young ladies of the environs, and even the tradesmen's daughters of the village who were teachers there, made a bold stand against her sway. They rapped the knuckles of the girls she favoured, they presented surreptitious plum-cake to those who fell under her displeasure. Miss Chuff, driven to desperation by her assumption, stoutly demanded one Sunday morning whether Miss Hill thought herself Empress of Rooshia? Magdalen vouchsafed no response; but Chuff, speedily collapsing into floods of tears, and adding irrelevant riders to her queries by demanding whether she was a door-mat for Miss Hill to wipe her feet upon; whether her connections were not to the full as respectable as Miss Hill's, although they were not money-grubbers that lived on the taxes got by grinding poor people's faces; with similar incongruities—she was easily vanquished by the stately silent lady, who withered people with one glance of her proud eye.

To the poor, Magdalen was a sedulous benefactor and an affectionate friend. But she could not get on even with them. The bed-ridden old women regarded her bounty with greater distaste than they did that of the rector. They would not look at her tracts; they did not care for her cold, measured accents when she read to them. They wanted something warm and com-

forting, they said, and they found only coldness and discomfort in Magdalen's ministrations. They hesitated to take the remedies she brought them. They regarded her with vague distrust. Even the curly-headed little children were afraid of the proud, severe lady in mourning who never smiled. She felt, though she was straining every nerve to do her duty as a Christian woman, that there was something that impeded her progress,—something that she could not remove or quell. Where was *she* going? Truly she was pursuing the narrow, thorny path that should probably lead to reward; but was her mode of travelling the right one? Should she have trampled on the brambles and the sharp pebbles instead of gently moving them aside? She asked herself the question sometimes,—asked if she could not conciliate instead of commanding, invite instead of repelling. Pride stepped in and forbade further research; and in pride and silence she wrapped herself up, and went on her lonely way. The women, as I have hinted, regarded her with a lively aversion; the gentlemen admired, but gradually avoided her. She was a little too freezing. Now and then William the dragoon, whose regiment was by this time in garrison at St. Becketbury, came over to The Casements. He was highly popular, even with Lady Talmash, and he could make his brother laugh; but so soon as he was gone the temporary gaieties of the Elizabethan mansion were discontinued, and Magdalen resumed her icy empire, not only there, but at the rectory and the church. "One doesn't like sitting next to a snowball, you know," the jolly young fox-hunting squires used to say; so Lady Talmash's severe although hospitable table became as deserted as she liked it to be,—not

for economy's sake, but for pride. The two women, the old hermit and the young anchorite, used to sit opposite each other in state, eating scarcely anything. The table was loaded with plate; wine sparkled in the decanters; yet the dinner was more barren than a Barmecide's feast. The butler and his subordinates went through all the forms of a ceremonial dinner; but they knew that it was given for Pride's sake; that Pride sat bodkin between the two ladies, and was the only guest that went away filled from that dreary board.

The Casements was, however, Magdalen's only home. The dragoon was wild; the clergyman was celibate; none of the other Sons of Mammon were old enough to offer her a home. The position she held was anomalous. The link of the dead man was wanting to bind her to the family who should have been her brothers. She felt this, and mourned, and said nothing. Sir Jasper Goldthorpe had happily recovered the shock brought about by his great grief, and which had culminated in a series of fainting fits at Goldthorpe Manor on the evening of the funeral. But he was sadly shaken. His physicians had insisted that he should temporarily abstain from the cares of business. He went away to Nice, to Naples, to Malta, with Lady Goldthorpe; came back in the autumn of 1850; once more made his appearance among the clerks in Beryl Court; but suffered a relapse on the very anniversary of his son's death, and went abroad again. He was now in Belgium, whither he had come from Paris, and was staying at the residence of some great financial dignitary of the Low Countries. His affairs in Beryl Court had gone on prosperously during his absence, and he was richer than ever. But Sir Jasper was expected back: of course,

being so rich a man, he had been made a commissioner of the Exhibition, foreman of a jury, and all sorts of things. From ill health he had been unable to attend the opening ceremonial, but he was now convalescent; and on his return Magdalen was to join him in Onyx Square: only for a few days, however, for the girl loathed London and the gilded palace there, and seemed to prefer her residence in the village where she was hated. Had she gone away from Swordsley for good, there would have been probably, with the exception of the rector and Lady Talmash, but one person who would have regretted her absence. That person was the Reverend Ruthyn Pendragon, B.A., the Reverend Ernest Goldthorpe's curate, and who, in his clumsy fashion, had fallen madly in love with Magdalen Hill.

CHAPTER IX.

A Lay Brother.

A LAY Brother came out of the convent on the hill, and so by the winding road into the valley where lay the village of Hoogendracht. It was an evening in May, and the far landscape was bathed in mellow hues. A fat and fair prospect was that Belgian champaign to look upon. Far as the eye could reach, to east and west the corn-fields ranged and waved, and the warm sun had just begun to sprinkle their green expanse with golden patches—pale gold as yet, and unalloyed by July fierceness. To the south the valley rose again into thick-wooded heights, where the birds held high harmony all day long, and partridges and pheasants might have thanked their stars that Flanders had a code of game-laws as well as England, and that their

respite lasted until the latter days of August. Embowered in the woods shone out two or three blocks of white masonry, pierced by many windows, on which the sun gleamed with an arrowy sharpness, and which, I grieve to say, for the sake of the picturesque, were also provided with tall chimneys, from whose tops smoke curled and diapered the woodland distance. These were cloth factories; for Hoogendracht was rich in manufacture of woollens. Right down in the midst of the valley was the straggling village of Hoogendracht proper, with its church of St. Josse-ten-Groode, its fountain, its antique stone cross, and quaint little Town-house, now the quarters of the village mayor. It was girt about by farm premises, rich in kine, in sheep, in pigs, in breweries, in wheelwrights' shops, and in beetroot-crushing mills. Half-way down the winding road which the Lay Brother traversed was the château of St. Hendrik, held for ages by the noble family of Vandercoockenhagen, now represented by Wilhelm, twenty-second baron of that name; and to the north, on the summit of a high hill, the only object, barren, savage, and gloomy to look upon in the whole cheerful picture, was the monastery of the Pères Maristes des Bonnes-œuvres,—the Marist Fathers of Goodworks,—a religious community of the very strictest discipline and rule of life, and who were generally considered to be a succursal offshoot of the stern ascetics of La Trappe.

When you had turned your back to the grey, time-worn abode of the monks, and looked around to the corn-fields swelling in lazy undulations; to the umbrageous thickets where the partridges and pheasants rejoiced and the cloth factories nestled; to the prosperous village in the middle of the vale, and on whose

southern side the little river Dracht babbled and struggled, all seemed happy, smiling Peace. Beyond that bare hill not an inch of ground lay waste. What ponds or rivulets the vale had,—tiny tributaries to the Dracht,—were either the elected swimming-baths of ducks and geese, or turned the wheels of mills, or were rich in roach and dace and trout, sternly tabooed to piscatorial interlopers by threatening notices. The abundant manure-heaps in the farm-yards, the turkeys that gobbled over the scandal of the poultry-yard, the well-stored barns, the sturdy Flemish cocks that continually crowed forth their shrill pæans of defiance to all the Gallic cocks beyond Lille and Verviers, the pigs that grunted a Brabançonne in *bassetaille*, the sheep that fed, not forty, but four hundred like one, on the beetroot peelings, the fat lazy horses that had grown epicures in pasturage, and tired of grazing, rubbed their noses against palings, or with dull thuds beat now one hoof, and now the other on the turf to while away the time: all these spoke of Peace. The cows were too proud to rise and stalk away as a stranger passed, but looked at him instead with their vast chests prone to the grass and their haunches bent, with a lazy, landed-proprietor kind of air, chewing the cud disdainfully as though they thought, “We are the cows that Cuyp and Karl du Jardin painted in the sheeny fields and the golden sunset, and that Verboeckhoven paints so well now. We are historic cows. Reason not about us. Regard our horns, our mild eyes, our well-set bones, our heaving flanks. Regard, and pass.”

The château of St. Hendrik had been recently re-decorated, for the Baron Vandercoockenhagen XXII. was rich, and a nobleman of taste. But the old forms

and the old carvings had been well imitated, and the mansion-house had a respectably mediæval look. It had need to have been renovated. We are in 1851. Five-and-thirty years before, the château of St. Hendrik had been turned inside out. The walls had been riddled by bullets, the roof blown off by grenades, the rich furniture smashed, the windows torn from their frames. Of the orchard only a few blackened stumps of apple-trees remained. The bearded barley that was threshing in the barn was trampled into a gory mud, and among the parterres of the flower-garden men had hacked and hewed each other until the life-blood floated the tall lilies, and made the red roses pale beside it. Here the warriors of Napoleon the Great had left their sign, and cast their crimson shadow. Here, as there, as far beyond, and to every point of the compass, there had been slaughter and rapine, and burning of houses, and outraging of women, not alone in the year of the Waterloo campaign, but for many, many ages—almost since Christianity began. For Gaul is divided into parts three, and this was Belgic Gaul, “the cockpit of Europe;” and men had so cut each other’s throats here and hereabouts, for the last sixteen hundred years, that *Prælium* would have been a far more appropriate name for the village in the vale than *Hoogendracht*. Scarcely a farmer was there in the place but whose fore-elders had been burnt out or slain, or pillaged by the Romans or Frenchmen, Imperialists or Republicans: Spaniards, Englishmen, Haliens, Walloons, Croats, and Pandours had come to this out-of-the-way place to fight. The husbandman could scarcely trace a furrow without turning up a splinter of bone; and in the church a stately monument to Don Esteban de Lara y Lara,

killed in a skirmish at Hoogendracht A.D. 1580, was neighboured by a humble mural tablet, setting forth in lean English characters that Captain Basil Horton, who fell by a hand-grenade in defending Hoogendracht against the French king's troops A.D. 1707, had been buried (he belonging to the ancient faith) in the adjoining graveyard, and that this memorial had been erected by the High and Mighty Prince John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, to whom the deceased was aide-de-camp.

Flanders, however, has always been remarkable for a sound flesh and a healthy skin, and the wounds inflicted upon her speedily heal. So soon as the blood has ceased to flow and the anguish is over, the patient begins to smile again; and in a year's time or so, scarcely a cicatrix remains to tell of the hideous gash. The husbandmen of Hoogendracht, when they had escaped the conscription, troubled themselves very little with the thought that their fathers had been forced into the ranks to lose their lives in quarrels that did not concern them. Peterkin's beet-root crop was abundant. What mattered it to Peterkin if his great uncle's acres had been grubbed up, his homestead ruined, and half-a-dozen ruffian soldiers of the Danube or the Douro quartered on him? Jan walked firmly and trippingly. His ancestor's wooden leg did not lie heavy on his soul. He hummed the Brabançonne at his work, and thought King Leopold the very best sovereign in Christendom, St. Gudule, St. Hendrik, and St. Josse-ten-Groode the very pinks and pearls of sanctity, and Genéviève de Brabant the cynosure of noble damsels. He ate his rye-bread, drank his sour beer, clumped about in his sabots, said his prayers,

burnt his tallow-candles to the Virgin, and sold his bees-wax to the dealers at Louvain, kept his kermesses, hoarded his money in earthen pots and worsted stockings, and paid his taxes without grumbling. What more could he do to repeat in his Flemish tongue the spirit, if not the words, of the Latin inscription on the old house in Brussels, "From plague, famine, and war, good Lord, deliver us!"

So peace reigned in Hoogendracht, and the corn and flowers grew above the mouldering bones, the shattered blades, the rusty cannon-balls, and the dented head-pieces; and every man lived under the shield of the law, and in the quiet possession of his own flocks and herds, till it should please some conqueror to come and root up Hoogendracht again, and strip every peasant as bare as a forked radish. Meanwhile the place smiled and gladdened every man's eyes to behold it. It might have gladdened those of the Lay Brother; but as he walked he kept them bent resolutely to the ground. He was a tall and stalwart brother, with a Saxon face, and closely shaven. He had not assumed the tonsure, but his hair—what little, at least, could be seen under his coarse woollen cap—was rigidly cropped to his head. For all raiment he had a long, loose, amply-sleeved, and hooded frock, of some rough woollen stuff, reaching from his neck to his heels, and girt about his waist by a cord, from which hung neither cross nor rosary. Those simple ornaments of monachism were reserved for the fathers of the convent. His unstockinged feet were thrust into wooden shoes, hay being stuffed into the interstices between his flesh and the rough wood. And so in mean and sordid garb, that had a mixture of the monk and of the farm-

labourer in it, the Lay Brother stalked silent and with his eyes cast down.

His life was a hard one. He was but *servus servorum*, the slave of the slaves of self-mortification. The intervals between his rude labours, or his menial services, might be filled up in pious meditation; but he was not yet admitted even to the noviciate. He might remain for life a lay brother; and his companions in solitude were stolid and ignorant—Flemish boors, in fact, of a serious turn of mind, who were content to hew wood and draw water for the good fathers, without a chance, or indeed a hope, of ever putting on the cowl. The Lay Brother, however, was on a partial equality, so far as his material life was concerned, with the monks. He was allowed to share their toil and their privations. He rose with them in the middle of the night and at dawn to attend mass, and to hear gloomy chants. He stood with them in the refectory, listening during meal-time to the same austere homilies against the lusts of the flesh, read by the Father Prælector, partook standing of the same Spartan diet of lentil-soup, brown bread, black radish, cheese, and cold water. He, as a lay brother, was allowed to eat meat at Easter; but his comrades, the boors, did not eat it, and he abstained. He worked and vegetated. Were he to die here, he would again be put on an equality with the brethren, and be thrust into a hole in his rope-girt gabardine, unshrouded and uncoffined, with a plain wooden cross above his grave. For this consummation the Lay Brother devoutly prayed. For him, peace was not in the cheerful vale of Hoogen-dracht, but in the field behind the convent, on the plateau, which served as a cemetery.

There were forty Fathers of Goodworks at the convent. They had been dispossessed at the Revolution, and persecuted with unrelenting severity by the elder Napoleon. Their passive, uncomplaining forbearance under unmerited oppression irritated the Emperor and King much more than overt resistance would have done. "*Sapristi!*" cried his Majesty one day, I will turn every one of these forty shavelings into grenadiers of the Guard. His Imperial Majesty did a great many more quiet little things in the way of despotism—things much more cruel and arbitrary than shooting Palm the bookseller, or sending the brave guerillas of Major Schill, as though they were felons, to the galleys—than even his bitterest enemies in England are aware of. It was thought an act of clemency on his part when he permitted the intractable, albeit inoffensive, Marist Fathers to emigrate to America. After Waterloo a poor and scattered remnant, most of them feeble and ancient men, but who had preserved the traditions of their discipline intact, came back to Belgium. They were soon driven out again by the Dutch dynasty, to whom the Low Countries had been apportioned; but after 1831, the conciliatory government of Leopold permitted them to return, and to enjoy their humble own again.

They wore long-cowled frocks, of form like unto that of the lay brothers, but of coarse white flannel. Their feet were bare and sandalled, their heads, but for the ring of hair at the base of the skull, shaven. They ate little; they worked long hours in the rudest employments of field industry. They taught a school of vagrant children sanctioned by the State, and were the physicians and the relieving officers to the poor.

Their farm-lands brought them in rich annual profits, but not one brother had a sou of his own, or even a purse to put it in. The consolation of literary study was even denied them; and in their wretched cells, on their hard pallets, they were expected to meditate on death, and not to read. They observed the rule of silence with a severity even more frightful than ever reigned in a modern penitentiary; and the deadliest sin against conventual discipline, was the utterance of a word not warranted by the actual requirements of labour. No ghastly reminders of "Brother, we must die," were interchanged between them. They plied their spades and broke their clods in mute companionship. The Guest-master only, or *Père Hospitalier*, and the Reverend Superior of the convent, who wore a golden chain above his flannel robe, but lived as poorly and worked as hard as his brethren—these and the lay brethren who fetched and carried from the village were permitted to speak on matters of necessity. So, without books to read, without human converse to hear or smiles to cheer them, without shirts, without shoes, without pocket-handkerchiefs, or sheets, or pillows,—with no money to spend, no meat to eat, no kindly words to soothe their last moments, lived the Marist Fathers of Goodworks—sternly and gloomily, and confident that the road they were treading was the sure one, and torturing themselves in hopes of a blessed immortality. The publications of the Tract Society never reached their grim abode. They would have spurned such heretical pamphlets; and yet I think more than one of these devoted friars might have asked himself with advantage the question, "Where are you going?"

Among these forty men who herded in one com-

mon living sepulchre, there were the usual number of Fathers Hulbert, Austin, Jerome, Francis, Joseph, Stephen, Philip, Luke, and so forth. They assumed their new baptism in taking the cowl; but they did not all belong to one nation, and in the great outside world they had gone by very many different names. Thus, Father Hulbert may have been a once famous tenor-singer at the Grand Opera in Paris, to whom Emperors had sent diamond snuff-boxes, and who had lain in the alcoves of princesses of the blood royal. Father Austin had been a chamberlain at the court of Leopold; Stephen a wealthy iron-master at Liège; Jerome an officer in the Royal Guard; Joseph a brilliant poet and wit; Francis a fashionable roué; Luke a ———; but there is no need to pursue the catalogue further. The world was quite shut out from the convent of Hoogendracht, and all the pomp, pride, and ambition of man disappeared beneath the flannel frock and the hempen girdle.

As the Lay Brother neared the château of St. Hendrik, he found a handsome barouche and pair standing at the gates. M. le Baron Vandercoockenhagen XXII. had visitors staying at the château, and he was about to take an airing with two guests, one of whom had been an invalid. The horses champed, the postilion, in the lightest of jackets and the brightest of top-boots, clacked his whip. Two spruce outriders reined their horses in, a little in advance. M. le Baron Vandercoockenhagen XXII. was a burly Belgian magnifico, with quite a conservatory of coloured ribbons at his button-hole. He came forth from the château with a lady and gentleman, whom, with the utmost politeness, he assisted into the barouche. The lady was

stout, and had been comely and cheerful, but she looked pale and careworn. The gentleman was tall and broadly built. His hair was light; his age might have been a little over fifty; but he stooped and shook painfully, and could only walk with the assistance of a stick. At length the three were comfortably seated in the barouche; the Baron waved his hand, the postilion gave another clack to his whip, and the rapid wheels rolled down the winding road.

The Lay Brother had stood apart, by a wayside cross. When the party had left, he made to resume his way; but the gate-porter, a fat Fleming, in a gorgeous livery of green and gold, recognised, stopped him, and bade him good even.

The Lay Brother turned his feet towards Hoogen-dracht, bowed his head and would have passed on; but the gate-porter was not so to be put off.

"Have you heard the news, Brother Dominique?"

"We hear no news. I have heard nothing."

"Our guests leave us to-morrow. They are called to England. And you, whither may you be bound?"

"To the post-office, for the Reverend Superior's letters."

"Ah, the barouche will be there long before you. M. le Baron does not feed his horses with broken bottles; and when they go it is with a will. Do you know whom our guests are, Brother Dominique?"

"I am not permitted to ask. No."

"Well, they are English; no conceited beggarly upstarts of Frenchmen. Oh, no. The invalid gentleman you saw is a great English milord,—Sir Jasper Goldthorpe by name, a member of the British parliament, and richer they say than Rothschild."

"Ah!"

"And the *belle dame*, whom should she be but Miladi Goldthorpe, his wife."

"Good evening," said the Lay Brother, turning his eyes to the ground and walking on.

"*Sont-ils rustres, ces frères laïques?*" muttered the porter, as he closed the gate. "That Brother Dominique is as surly as a bear. I wonder to what nation that lay brother belongs. He can speak no Flemish, and his French is decidedly not of Paris. Perhaps he is a Walloon."

When the Lay Brother arrived at the post-office in the main street of Hoogendracht, the official handed him a packet of letters for the Reverend Superior. He bowed his head and was going away, when the postmaster called him back.

"Stay," he said, "there is a letter for you, Brother Dominique, with the English postmark, and in a very pretty female hand. *Vous êtes en bonne fortune, mon frère.*"

"It is from my sister," observed Brother Dominique coldly; but as he extended his hand for the letter his fingers trembled, and he clutched rather than took it.

"I don't believe in lay brothers' lay sisters," was the sage remark of the postmaster, as he proceeded to stamp the contents of the outgoing letter-bag.

The Lay Brother pursued his road back towards the convent on the hill until he had passed the château of St. Hendrik by full a hundred yards. Then he drew the letter in a woman's hand from the bosom of his gaberdine, broke the seal, and eagerly tore open the envelope. His pale face was flushed, and his whole frame shook.

"At last," groaned the Lay Brother, and in the English tongue. "At last. A letter in January, and a letter in May, and sixteen months have passed in this prison, and yet no hope."

CHAPTER X.

An Exceedingly Vulgar Person.

WHAT is a gentleman? Who is a gentleman? I pause for a reply. Of course there will be at once as many score thousand answers, indignant, sarcastic, explanatory, and argumentative, to my queries as there are readers to this story. But I must repeat them nevertheless. "What is a gentleman? and who, if you please, has a right to be considered one?" Maginn once, discussing the vexed question, quoted an Irish authority, who laid it down that for duelling purposes any one might be considered a gentleman who wore a clean shirt once a week. The present generation is more fastidious, and would not be satisfied with such a standard of gentility. The Byronic idea of a gentleman we are all familiar with: small hands and feet, a high forehead (warranted alabaster), curly hair, and a fine taste for hock and soda-water in the morning; but when we find a being so endowed squabbling with his wife, recommending Mr. Grimaldi, the clown, to take soy with his apple-tart, and composing a scurril poem under the inspiration, not of Rhenish wine, but of diluted Geneva, one begins to doubt somewhat of the correctness of the Byronic theory. It is plain, I am afraid, that manners have little to do with making a gentleman—in the world's sense of the term. The Plantagenets ate their meals with their fingers, slept on

straw, and did not use pocket-handkerchiefs; and Charlemagne, not being able to write, was compelled to dip the fore-finger of his glove in ink and smear it over the parchment, when it was necessary that the imperial sign-manual should be affixed to an edict. Imagine "Carolus Magnus X his mark"! The best-bred men of modern times have often been of the most plebeian extraction. The French Duke de Noailles-Noailles confessed that the dancing-master Vestris, if his demeanour was to be taken as a criterion, was the most polished gentleman he ever saw; whereas, *per contra*, read what St. Simon has to say of the bearish and brutish manners of the great Dukes and Peers of his time. Brummell, the pattern of English patricians, was the son of a petty lodging-house keeper, and the grandson of a menial servant;—if he ever had a grandfather at all. Again, as to appearance. Take down your Lavater's Physiognomy, and, placing your hand over the names appended to the portraits, just strive by guesswork to determine who are the nobly descended and who the base-born in that long panorama of faces. Long odds may be laid that when you come to remove your hand, you will discover that this eagle-nosed, lofty-browed worthy, who by his countenance should be of the bluest-blood of Castile, is the son of a cobbler; and that this bull-necked, snub-nosed, thick-lipped, clod-hopping-looking fellow is a grandee of a hundred quarterings, or a prince of an imperial house. Now, do you think I am about to launch into some hotly democratic invective against the folly and fallacy of claims of long descent; that I am about to quote the "grand old gardener and his wife;" or ask, with Wat Tyler's crew, who was a gentleman when the gardener

delved and his wife span; or chuckle over the ambassador-poet's proposed epitaph:

"Ladies and gentles, by your leave,
Here lies the body of Matthew Prior;
The son of Adam and of Eve:
Can Bourbon or Nassau go higher!"

No: I have not any wish to attempt sarcasm either one way or the other—either about "tenth transmitters of foolish faces," or poor varlets whose blood "has crept through scoundrels ever since the Flood." Blood, quotha! If I am pricked, will not my veins yield the life current; and if I choose to wear blue spectacles, may I not declare it to be the real tap—the genuine *sangre azul*? Blood, forsooth! What are your two-penny-halfpenny Howards and Percys to *my* ancestry,—to yours, my descendant of five hundred cattle-lifters,—to yours, Fitz Bogie designed of Macgillicuddy; to yours, M. de Sidonia, who carry three trumpets proper in memory of your ancestor who helped to blow the walls of Jericho down? and what are all our boastings of ancient descent compared with those of the Chuggs of Suffolk, who have held the plough and cracked the clods for twice five hundred years. Let us all be proud of our progenitors, and think ourselves each and severally the very finest gentlemen that ever stepped; and when a rude person says, "Sir, you are no gentleman," let us answer him, "Sir, you are no judge."

And yet: Who is a gentleman? What is a gentleman? The question is as far from solution as ever. *I* don't know, for one; but if, as we are generally compelled to do, the general verdict of the world is to be fallen back upon, it is very certain, not only that the Reverend Ruthyn Pendragon was no gentle-

man, but that he was, on the contrary, an exceedingly vulgar person.

There had been curates and curates at Swordsley. The rector, who was deaf, paralytic, and all but blind, had been taken care of for a long period by his relatives, who found the mild and genial climate of Torquay most suited to his infirm state of health. The large revenues of the incumbency had been carefully paid in to the bankers of the Reverend Mr. Marrowfat—that was the name of the invalid rector; and the successive curates had been as punctually paid their small and not increasing stipends. The evil-tongued, who where neither more nor less numerous at Swordsley than elsewhere, averred that the patroness in ordinary to ecclesiastical preferment under the Rector of Swordsley was a certain Mrs. Gryphon, by the mother's side a Marrowfat, by conjugal relation the widow of a broken ship-broker, and who was good enough to officiate as housekeeper, companion, and general *locum tenens* to the infirm clerical gentleman. She did everything for him. She opened his letters and read those which he received; nay, after the Reverend Mr. Marrowfat's death, human malignity went so far as to say—in the great probate case of Marrowfat and Wife *versus* Gryphon—that this indefatigable widow lady made the rector's will for him, and had it all her own way in making it. This, however, is only by the way. I am afraid that she did appoint the curates, and that the advent of the ecclesiastic who stammered, and of the other one who had no H's, must be laid to her charge. Of the red-headed curate, however, Mrs. Gryphon must be held blameless. He of the scarlet locks was a nominee of the Chuckle-buxes, a rival branch of the

Marrowfat family, who obtained temporary dominion over the poor old clergyman during an absence of Mrs. Gryphon in London. The widow had a graceless nephew,—a Gryphon, not a Marrowfat,—who, having spent a large legacy, principally in hire of dog-carts, and the purchase of cherry-brandy, shirts of extraordinary pattern, and coloured lithographs of eminent dramatic performers, had enlisted in the Hussars, but was speedily bought off from the draff and husks of the dépôt at Maidstone by his affectionate aunt. Having unsuccessfully tempted fortune as a commercial traveller for an article in general demand (the celebrated steel-edged wooden razors), as a billiard-marker, and as a frequenter of certain dry skittle-alleys, whither gentlemen of agricultural appearance were brought to play, and where, it is said, they were sometimes drugged and robbed, young Ripton Gryphon again enlisted; this time in her Majesty's infantry of the line. He was again bought off; and after enjoying for a short time an appointment in the metropolitan police force, from which he was dismissed for a fault, harmless in itself but highly subversive of discipline, being that of offering to fight his inspector for half-a-crown, this gay youth became an omnibus conductor, a waiter at a tavern where the hours were rather early than late, and an attendant at fictitious auctions, where his business was to bid for gigantic plated cruet-stands, and, with an air of extreme solicitude, to inspect curiously-inlaid writing-desks, handed round for that purpose on a japanned tea-tray. In this place of business he was ordinarily known by the familiar sobriquet of "Rip the Bonnet." If I have mentioned the peculiar phases in the career of this sportive young man, it has been

merely to mark the strong points of contrast in his character. Ripton Gryphon was exceedingly intelligent. His education had been excellent. He was a good classical scholar, a ready speaker, and he wrote a beautiful hand. These acquirements did not in the least militate against his being, root and branch, a hopeless and incurable scamp. With that odd perversity not uncommon to her sex, Mrs. Gryphon positively adored this lamentable scapegrace; and as he happened to be at the same time tall, curly-haired, straight of limb, bright of eye, and generally good-looking, the widow declared that her Ripton was born to be a gentleman; that he would sow his wild oats; that he should go into the Church, and that a country curacy was the very thing to suit him, pending, of course, his elevation to the episcopal bench. To all appearance, it certainly appeared that the soil of Mr. Ripton Gryphon's moral nature had been exhausted by the cultivation of wild oats, and that unless it lay fallow for a time it was not likely to produce anything but an abundant crop of hemp; but with the energy and audacity characteristic of a lady accustomed to deal only with weak and timid people, and to work her will upon them, Mrs. Gryphon set about converting a young fellow who was bidding fair to graduate at the hulks into a candidate for holy orders. She found out the easy chaplain to an easy bishop, who had already ordained a gentleman not quite right in his head for a living near the Land's End, and another who was not quite right in his morals for a chaplaincy in the West Indies. Mrs. Gryphon learned to know, as some of us know, and as all of us ought to know, that other means exist for wearing a cassock and bands,

and tacking "reverend" to one's name, besides taking a university degree. The easy chaplain recommended her to a tutor for her Ripton,—a college man, a ripe scholar, who had taken deacon's orders, who was as proud as Lucifer and as poor as Job, and whose name was Ruthyn Pendragon. The graceless nephew was confided to the care of this instructor, and in a quiet retirement at Clapham, supported from the widow lady's funds, did, for a certain period, make some progress in leaving off sack and living cleanly, like a gentleman. What is a gentleman? It was during the sojourn of Mrs. Gryphon in London, of course in the interests of her *protégé*, that the Chucklebux faction achieved a momentary triumph; and the reverend gentleman who had no H's, having married a lady who had two thousand pounds, and so resigned his appointment, brought in the curate with the red head. Mrs. Gryphon returned to Torquay in a rage, and the shock of her temper was almost too much for the poor old rector. She was appeased, however, by abject concessions, and the immediate and ignominious dismissal of the entire Chucklebux faction (the danger was imminent; for there was one Chucklebux who was medical, of the homœopathic persuasion, and who was also a distinguished amateur will-maker) and she soon resumed her empire over her reverend patient and relative. So hard did this lady work towards the accomplishment of her purpose, so various were her resources, so strong was her will, so feeble were those with whom she had to deal, that I for one should not have been surprised if success had crowned her enterprise, and if Ripton Gryphon had at last crept through the hawse-holes on board the ecclesiastical bark. Stranger things have

happened, believe me. I am not writing from imagination or without book. All the widow's plots and schemes were, alas, foiled by Ripton Gryphon taking it into his head to vindicate his natural character. He ran away from Mr. Pendragon, his tutor, and was not heard of any more. Many a similar scapegrace, whose relatives are vainly inquiring after him, or, through the medium of newspaper advertisements, as vainly entreating him to return, is quietly tried under a false name at some provincial assizes, and quietly transported, without anybody save some chance gaoler being the wiser for it. "That's a baronet, sir," said a convict's warder to me once on Southsea Common, pointing to a peculiarly villanous-looking individual in cross-barred canvas and an oil-skin hat, who was leisurely tickling the turf with his spade,—“that's a baronet, and kep' his 'osses and his 'ounds. But, Lord love you, sir, he ain't at Portsmouth, leastways as his genteel fam'ly think. Must live abroad for his 'elth, sir. He's at Paw, in the Pyrenees, a living in his own chatow, is that baronet.” But what became of Ripton Gryphon there was no deponent to say. He went away, and didn't come back. He may have subsided into penal servitude, as has already been hinted. He may have turned up swollen, blue, ghastly, and drowned, in the ooze of some riverain creek, and have passed from a parish dead-house to a parish grave. He may have enlisted again, have died on board a transport, and been flung to the fishes. He may have been murdered. Who knows? Men pass and pass in the great glass of Life like the Kings in Macbeth's vision; and there is no remembrance of those that have gone before, and no knowledge of those that are to come afterwards.

Who, for instance, could have foretold that Ruthyn Pendragon, the tutor of the graceless scion of the Gryphons, would have ever become curate of Swordsley! yet it was his *kismet*, his fate, to occupy that post. By one of those odd coincidences which are perpetually baffling and perplexing us, Pendragon, having passed into priest's orders, was recommended to the new rector of Swordsley,—poor old Mr. Marrowfat having been gathered to his fathers,—and obtained employment from the Reverend Ernest Goldthorpe. It is not fitting to tell how the widow, at once bereaved of her rector and of her nephew, raged and stormed at the course which events had taken. It wasn't Ruthyn Pendragon's fault if Ernest Goldthorpe chose to take him. He wanted a curacy, and Ernest wanted a curate: what was more natural? Why should Mrs. Gryphon charge him with the blackest ingratitude, and accuse him of being a traitor and an intriguer? He had not solicited the appointment. It had fallen in his way, and he had taken it. The widow would have liked to say all kinds of possible things against the new curate; but there was nothing to be said against him. He was stanchly recommended by college magnates. He was eminently learned. His poverty was notorious; but his moral character was without stain. Ernest Goldthorpe was glad to be able to do a service to so able and respectable a young man. So the Gryphon was finally discomfited,—she had got all the rector's money though, and all the Marrowfats and Chucklebuxes, with their lawyers to boot, failed in dispossessing her thereof,—and the Reverend Ruthyn Pendragon was curate to the Rector of Swordsley.

Stay,—learning, respectability, character, all granted

—there might have been one little thing to be alleged against the Reverend Ruthyn Pendragon. He *was* a very vulgar person. He had plenty of H's, and used them in the right place, but he was desperately vulgar. He looked like a vulgar person. He talked like one. He ate and drank like one. He dressed like one. There was a vague but uncertain vulgarity in his face, his smile, his demeanour. His bold, firm, defined handwriting was vulgar to every cross of a *t*, to every dot of an *i*. When he first entered the presence of Lady Talmash, that aristocratic church-woman held up her hands, and whispered to Magdalen, "However comes that bore by the name of Pendragon?"

By lineage Ruthyn was a gentleman of the most ancient descent. What were Normans, Saxons, Danes, to his old stock? He sprang from the genuine Phœnician *souche*, as I suppose all the Tre, Pols, and Pens of Cornwall do. Ruthyn came from that famous although somewhat remote province. Unhappily there were no tin-mines in his family, nor, had Pendragon died, would there have been twenty thousand or ten under-ground in Cornwall anxious to know the reason why. He had no money. He was an orphan, and alone in the world.

An old grandmother at St. Mawes had brought this vulgar person up. She did what she could for him, and her small savings were laid out for his benefit. Ruthyn's father was a gentleman, who, about the year 1825, in company with other adventurous Cornishmen, had gone in quest of some silver-mines in Peru, and found the *vomito nero* instead, of which, at Lima, he straightway died. The old grandmother did what she could for the orphan, which was not much. The

father had, on the principle of conveying coals to Newcastle, taken most of the available ready money of the family with him to the silver-mines of Peru. In after years Ruthyn Pendragon did not mind confessing that in his boyhood he had made a voyage in a fishing-smack, with a view to see whether he would like to be apprenticed to the sea; and that he had served a short probation behind the shop-counter of a chemist, who likewise sold grocery and haberdashery, at Truro. These early associations may have been instrumental in planting the first seeds of that vulgarity for which Ruthyn Pendragon was always noted, and for which he eventually became famous. In process of time a Cornish gentleman of means, who had known the paternal Pendragon, advised Ruthyn's grandmother to send him to a certain ancient and well-known grammar-school in the West Country. He made great progress in his studies here, and was commended by his master as a very diligent and capable boy, while he was excepted to by his schoolfellows as being a pitiably vulgar one. He obtained an exhibition at last, and took that, and his vulgarity, and a huge stock (for a boy) of book-learning, and a vast fund of natural shrewdness, observation, and humour, with him to college. Anything else? well, he had a slender wardrobe, and his grandmother's blessing. His successes at the university were solid, if not brilliant. It is said of him, that leaving school, and entering the mail-coach which was to convey him to town, Ruthyn Pendragon flung his hat into the air, and cried, "Here goes for Archbishop of Canterbury;" but at the university it was speedily decided that such a vulgar fellow would never obtain a fellowship, while doubts were expressed as to whether any

gentlemanly bishop could ever be persuaded to ordain such a lout. He was not likely to go wrong at the university. His health was of the rudest, his frame of the strongest; and excesses of dissipation would have hurt him no more than excess of study; but he was wise, and chose the latter. He read desperately and continuously. All that the gay youth of the university could say against him was that he was vulgar. They could not in their charmingly contemptuous manner call him a "cad." There was no denying his gentle blood. There was no finding a blot on his scutcheon. His great-great-grandfather was duly enshrined in Fuller's *Worthies*; a great-grand-uncle was mentioned in Anthony à Wood. The university tradesmen refrained from soliciting his custom; they knew that he could do them no good, and that they could do him no harm. Of what use were well-cut coats and brilliant scarves to one who, winter and summer, wore a plain black coat, which he acknowledged to have bought second-hand, and which he himself mended when it required repair; and beneath that a waistcoat and trousers of coarse grey serge, made by his old grandmother at St. Mawes? Where he first purchased his cap and gown was a mystery; the triflers declared that he had bought them at a London masquerade warehouse, on his way to college. They were certainly curiosities of faded shabbiness. His linen was dreadfully coarse, but scrupulously clean. He was in the habit of biting his nails to the quick, and no scissors were needed for his large healthy-looking hands. His hair was naturally dark and glossy, and he wanted no Macassar. He looked like a man who washed with yellow soap. He never had a row with the bargemen

on the river. They respected and feared him, not alone for his strength, which was palpably prodigious, but for his homely, kindly manners; for he was not above holding the poorest and roughest in discourse, and would talk to them by the half-hour together of common things and their daily avocations. He was not vulgar to them. Some called him a "true gentleman," but more frequently working-men exclaimed: "We likes him, for he talks like one of us." Clearly a very vulgar person, this Ruthyn Pendragon.

There were young gentlemen of his college whose quarterly cigar bills came to ten, nay, twenty, pounds. Viscount Racquetborough, indeed, owed his tobacconist two hundred and odd; but, then, most of that was discount. Ruthyn rarely smoked, but he casually mentioned that the use of a short pipe had been habitual to him before he was twelve years of age; and when from time to time some new man who thought him an original persuaded him to come to his rooms, he indulged in a calumet of that very strongest cavendish which young undergraduates buy, like Editions of the Fathers, more for show than use. Such strong meat is not fit for babes. He was by rule a water-drinker; but sometimes after rowing he would drink of the country beer that labourers drank. Somebody mentioned Allsopp's bitter ale to him, and he returned for answer, "What is that?" The Dons could not like him; he was too vulgar, and yet he was not offensive. He was innocent of any sins against collegiate discipline; but he neither invited nor seemed thankful for praise. The Dons were of course absolved from toadying him, and he seemed to be utterly ignorant of the fact that anything was to be got from toadying the Dons.

He was a great eater, although occasionally it was known that he passed the twenty-four hours without any sustenance more solid than bread and butter; yet those who watched him—and he was strange enough to have many observers—remarked that he could eat voraciously of cold meat, of suet pudding, and of buttered toast. He was not taciturn, for he was always ready to speak when spoken to; but he seldom volunteered conversation. Those who most objected to his vulgarity could not help admiring his honest discourse, full of manly and sensible reflection. He was one in whose presence young men were somehow ashamed to swear, to talk of loose and shameful things, or, indeed, to talk nonsense, if they could avoid it. The most brilliant conversationalists were on their mettle in the presence of Ruthyn Pendragon. And yet he could enjoy humour, and at a droll story, proper for a decorous man to hear, would open his large mouth and laugh sonorously. The only overt act against the usages of society which he had been known to commit was this. He had gone to a man's rooms to return some books he had borrowed—he was not above borrowing books. A dozen young fellows were present, and as Ruthyn Pendragon turned to depart, he saw a pack of cards which had been inadvertently left exposed on a table. Without any more ado he seized the cards, flung them into the fire, put his back before it, folded his arms, and said, "I am no censor of manners, Proctor, or Puritan, and you may think that this is no business of mine. But it is. Cards are the Devil's books. Wherever I find them, I burn them. Good morning. If anybody thinks he has a right to complain, I will fight him, here or elsewhere." But nobody cared to complain,

or to fight Ruthyn Pendragon; so he went, and, indeed, the sound that accompanied his departure much more resembled a cheer than a murmur of discontent. The story was told about and gained him much esteem, although men were careful not to invite this rigid hater of graven images to their card-parties. It was known that he was not a hypocrite, and would not lie. Lord Racquetborough expressed himself much pleased when he heard of the story. "By Jove," he said, "the Grisly Bear is a trump. I wish I could lend him fifty pounds. He looks so deuced hard up. I wish my father could put a living by for him." Viscount Racquetborough's papa was the Earl of Tenniscourt (family name De la Paume), very noble, but impoverished. Viscount Racquetborough was always wishing good things to everybody, but his lordship's habits were expensive and his means were limited. He ended by owing the tobacconist many hundreds of pounds; and, going through the court, retired to Baden-Baden until such time as he should be called to the House of Lords to legislate for vulgar people.

In the second year of Ruthyn's residence the old grandmother at St. Mawes died. The few pounds that were left of her savings barely sufficed to bury her, and to pay the expenses of her grandson to Cornwall and back. He had no kindred now, no money, and no friends. The country gentleman who had advised his being sent to the grammar-school was dead. He was known at the university, and might have earned some money by reading with men; but he preferred to leave college for a while. He went away, and found a situation as usher in a school near London. The master was an ignorant brute, who had been bankrupt

in the linen-drapery line, and who, when his certificate was definitely refused, had hesitated whether he should turn corn-cutter, low comedian, or school-master. He had an aptitude for the two former vocations; for the latter his capacity was limited to the possession of a very strong arm and a cruel disposition. Broomback, of Clapham Rise (he is Dr. Broomback now, a German degree), was glad to secure the services of a good classical scholar, and a university man to boot, for forty pounds a year. So Ruthyn Pendragon taught the boys, and Broomback beat them, and his wife took tithe and toll on their clothes and linen; and thus the division of scholastic labour was complete. The boys used to laugh at the usher's odd, rough ways, as he read Greek Testament to them, with a great hole under the arm of his black coat; but he was kind and just, and I think that before he went away nine out of ten of those children loved the poor usher. By great good luck there was a boy at Broomback's who was the son of a lady of some fortune. It having occurred to Broomback to beat this lad (who was frail and delicate) into a fever, he was removed from Clapham Rise; and when he got well, he begged so earnestly that his studies might be directed by his dear old usher,—so he called Ruthyn,—that his mamma forthwith engaged the friendless Cornishman as domestic tutor to her darling. In time Pendragon saved enough money to take a small house of his own, and advertise for pupils; and one of those pupils was the Ripton Gryphon you have heard of. I don't know what Ruthyn Pendragon thought of the preposterous plan of turning a scamp into a clergyman, indulged in by the vain and self-

willed housekeeper of the Reverend Mr. Marrowfat; but he did his duty by the prodigal, even to the extent of having one or two up and down fights with him. In these combats it must be admitted that Rip, although for his youth a somewhat experienced bruiser, invariably got the worst of it. He was the last pupil that Ruthyn Pendragon took. He was rich enough to go back to the university and take his degree. He was ordained on the strength of a miserable cure offered him by the proprietor of a large bone-boiling manufactory in the Essex marshes, who had a chapel on his premises for the benefit of his work-people, and thought it rather a grand thing to entertain a chaplain at his own expense. The young curate—he was now five-and-twenty years of age—did not stay long in Essex. The people were willing enough to receive religious instruction; but when they were not at work they straggled away to the adjacent beer-shops and got tipsy, and on Sundays they generally had the ague; and finally the bone-boiler breaking, it was discovered that he had been robbing everybody for the last fifteen years (he was the man who did eighty-seven thousand pounds worth of bills in one morning, assuring the firm who discounted them that every bill “had bones at the bottom of it,” but it turned out rather that every bill was fundamentally fraudulent); and Ruthyn Pendragon lost his chaplaincy. He was for a while unemployed; but, on the recommendation of a college-acquaintance, he became known to the Reverend Ernest Goldthorpe, whose views on Church matters, in the latter part of 1849, had not become so strongly pronounced, and who was happy to have a person so

fitted by education and principles for the responsible position confided to him, and who, by family descent at least, was undeniably a gentleman.

Such was the curate of Swordsley, who had not been six months in the village before he was idolised by the inhabitants, and who, when Ernest began to lean towards High-Church doctrines, became, by tacit consent, and without the slightest manifestation of open opposition on his part, the leader of the Low-Church party. "Ah, if he was only our rector!" cried the men of Swordsley. The women, too, were unanimous in his praise,—all save the haughty maiden at The Casements, Miss Magdalen Hill.

This young lady took no pains to disguise her disdain and aversion for the curate. He was from the very first eminently distasteful to her. She shuddered at the contrast between the pale, thoughtful, refined Ernest, with his high white brow, his crisply curled chestnut locks,—he was a delicate copy of his brother Hugh,—his tiny hands and feet, his neat and well-fitting garments, and this brawny, swarthy, hirsute, round-shouldered, bull-necked, large-limbed, Ruthyn Pendragon. The man's head was capacious enough, but his black hair grew thick and tufted down to within a couple of inches of his bushy eyebrows. Had he let Nature have her way, he would have been bearded like a pioneer. His hands were uncouthly shaped, and corrugated with knotty veins. Although he had the arms and the torso of a Hercules, he was short and clumsy in stature, and his legs were slightly bowed. She raged within herself to think that this ragged, vulgar, truncated colossus, who blew his nose with a trumpet-sound, who trampled rather than walked over

the flowers of a carpet, who clattered his tea-cup and ate his food ravenously, who dragged books from shelves, and if he took notice of a lap-dog only forced open its mouth to look at his teeth, who never wore gloves,—should be a gentleman of long descent; whereas Ernest, with all his refinement and his address, and the title that was in store for him, was but the son of a city money-spinner of mushroom extraction. Why should this vulgar person, she thought, be a gentleman? What right had he to a proud name,—he who looked like some Cornish miner fresh from wielding the pick? She did not soften in the least when she heard how good and kind and thoughtful he was to the poor. Had she no goodness, no kindness, and no thought? Was Ernest destitute of these good qualities? She bit her lip in anger when she heard that this rough, awkward man, who could not speak French, who had plainly said that people should come to church to pray, and not to look at pictures, and that the best mural decoration for the chancel was a fresh coat of withewash; who lodged at Pearkleborough's the grocer's, and bought his own chop or steak at the butcher's (who could scarcely bring himself to charge the curate anything for it)—should be revered and beloved by the parishioners, who looked on Ernest with a dislike that was little short of hatred. She heard that this man, who could scarcely handle a knife and fork, and was not fit to be trusted with a teacup, could bandage wounds, could bleed a horse, or put leeches on a child's temples; could dandle babies, could make out petty tradesmen's bills, could appease lovers' quarrels, and prevent contentious neighbours from going to law; and that he did all this

without currying favour with the poor (who are as easily and as often toadied as the rich), but always with a homely, sensible, simple-mindedness. Magdalen knew that the curate disapproved of the rector's views. She disliked him for that. She disliked him for his popularity. She disliked him for his very goodness. She did. And yet she was a virtuous, pious, and—so far as her purse went—a charitable young woman. How much more reason had she to dislike Ruthyn Pendragon, when, as he had the ineffable presumption to do, he told her that he loved her?

CHAPTER XI.

In which the Curate goes to London.

"He did," Magdalen exclaimed indignantly,—almost passionately for one of her composed manner. "He told me so in this very room."

"And what if he did, Maggy?" was the reply of the person to whom Miss Hill addressed herself. "Did you expect him to tell you so in the church-porch, or in front of the village-inn? If you have curates here, you must expect them to make love to you. It stands to reason."

This conversation took place one May morning in the antique drawing-room of The Casements. Magdalen Hill was sitting at her perpetual hard labour of illuminating select martyrologies on vellum; and her sole companion was a lady of about her own age, who, in certainly an easy if not elegant posture, reclined in a large arm-chair just opposite to Miss Hill's working-table, and contemplated, with that complacent interest

which only habitual laziness can give, the delicate and minute pursuit in which the other was engaged.

The lady was young—a year in advance of Magdalen perhaps, and although not beautiful, comely to look upon. She had more than what is termed “a tendency to *embonpoint*,” for she was decidedly plump, tottering on the verge of corpulence, so to speak. Now of fat girls there are several varieties. There is your fat baby-girl, a delightful little dumpling of a child, every one of whose dimples is a mine of delight, and every one of the creases in whose rosy limbs inspires you with an irresistible propensity to tickle it. These are the little baby-children that Rubens painted so gloriously. He made their little puffed-out cheeks celestially roseate; he curled their flaxen locks like unto the young tendrils of the vine; he tipped their little heels and elbows with rich carnations; he took away their sex, and made them epicene; and when he had added little wings of green and golden plumage to their shoulders, they were no longer baby-children, but angels, ministering in the apotheoses of kings and emperors, who, I sincerely trust, have reached the destination which the courtly pencil of Peter Paul ascribed to their dead majesties. Then there is your fat school-girl, with long, fair ringlets, profuse as a Louis-Quatorze perruque, with fixed blue eyes that remind you unpleasantly of the Pantheon Bazaar and Madame Montanari’s wax-work shop, and with a dull, listless fixity of demeanour that makes one always wish to find out whereabouts the string is, in order to pull it, and cause the eyes to move and the great doll to squeak “pa-pa” and “ma-ma.” Yet another variety of the fat school-girl is there in the romp, or “tom-

boy," who has cheeks as ruddy and as hard as a Ribstone pippin; who is continually grazing the skin off her arms, and tearing the trimming off the ends of her trousers; who, if she lives in the country, is in the habit of catching young colts, and riding them without saddle or bridle round paddocks; who is always getting into domestic trouble through her transactions with a big black dog fond of the water and of chivying cats; who is always laughing, has a tremendous appetite, and once fought with a Boy and came off victorious. The decline of the old-fashioned system of education, and the rise of seminaries and collegiate institutions, where young ladies attend lectures on the Od force and the Therapeutic Cosmogony of Ancient Art, has made the tom-boy fat girl an exceedingly rare specimen of femininity; but she is still occasionally to be met with—notably in Westmoreland boarding-schools, and in farm-houses of the West. I lament the progressive extinction of the merry fat girl. She usually grew up to be a jolly, comfortable matron, with a tribe of sunny children, all as great romps as she had been. Her pickled walnuts were perfection. She was one of those admirable women who always give you something to eat when you call upon them, and if you are neither hungered nor athirst, insist on your carrying away a pot of preserves or a slice of bride-cake with you. It was in the golden age, and England was merry England indeed, when those fat matrons who had been fat girls flourished. They used to entertain you at "meat teas"—bounteous repasts, where there were sausages and pressed beef, soused mackerel, and potato-cakes.

The fat young lady need not have been a fat

child. Some are of the lean kind in early girlhood, and fall into fatness as others fall into love. The Germans are the most prolific in fat young ladies. Their names are Ermengarde, Hilda, Dorothea. Their eyes are blue, but not doll-like, for they are full of sentiment. They call each other "*Du*," and continuously embroider cigar-cases, tobacco-pouches, nay, carpet-bags even, for officers in the Grand-Duke's army, or students of the university of Katzelstein. They sit and sigh, and carve Ludolf or Heinrich's names on the bark of linden-trees. They write pretty little sonnets to the sky and the birds in fat albums bound in blue watered silk. They make little sketches in coloured crayons, representing Körner going to the wars, the Fahnenwacht keeping his lonely watch, and not daring to name the lady of his love. They wish they were not quite so fat; but they are above drinking vinegar to make themselves thin. Perhaps they eat a little too much. They, too, marry, and have prodigious families; but they don't become jolly. They go through life with a meek smile of placid resignation, eating plentifully, and reading many novels. "*Elle a beaucoup souffert, Matame la Paronne, tans le temps*," tawny-moustached Captain Kalbsfleisch whispers to you at the *table-d'hôte*. You look at "*Matame la Paronne*," and see that she has got very well through two courses, and is making a vigorous onslaught on the third,—let us say of stewed trout and macaroons, hot roast-veal and raspberry-jam, or some equally anomalous German dish,—and find it difficult to persuade yourself that the Baroness has ever suffered from anything more serious than indigestion.

The lady who sat in the great arm-chair opposite

Magdalen Hill by no means belonged to the sentimental or to the doll-like category of stout young ladies. Far more probable that ten years before she had belonged to the order of tom-boys; indeed, it may be as well to make a clean breast of it at once, and avow that, at fourteen years of age, there had never been a franker, merrier, or noisier hoyden than the Honourable Letitia Salusbury. She was an only child; that may have had something to do with it. The lady her mother—a meek woman, who was frightened at mice, and firmly believed in the Apparition of Mrs. Veal, as related by Daniel Defoe—had died during her infancy, which may have had more to do with it. At all events, Letitia grew up through childhood petted, caressed, and humoured in every caprice, and if she was not spoiled herself, she spoiled, at least, innumerable frocks, pinafores, pairs of socks, and garden-hats. To enumerate the panes of glass fractured by this young lady, the lustres, china monsters, rare tea-cups, irrevocably smashed; the dolls she dismembered; the injuries she did to marqueterie tables and costly carpets; and the immense benefit she conferred on the book-selling trade by destroying every book that came within her reach, and so increasing the consumption of juvenile literature—would be a task as wearisome as to learn the annual speeches on the Army and Navy Estimates by heart, throwing in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's financial statement by way of epilogue. She condescended to learn very little, but what she did learn she learned very well. She was the bane, terror, and despair of eight successive governesses, native and foreign; but she took a fancy to the Swordsley curate who stammered, and actually went

through the Latin Accidence with him. Her indulgent papa, after vainly explaining to her that it was necessary for a young lady of her high station to attain some proficiency in the Continental languages, in music, and in drawing, despatched her to a Parisian *pensionnat*. After an enforced sojourn of three years, equally irksome to parent and child, Letitia returned to Swordsley a very fair French scholar. Of her drawing, it may be sufficient to say that she had a particular aptitude for sketching horses and dogs; but as to music, I am afraid that her progress had not extended farther than enabled her to whistle sundry lively airs familiar to the youth of Paris, and to join in the chorus of numerous convivial melodies, of which the wonder was to know where she had picked them up. It is certain, however, that she had publicly diswigged the dancing-master at the establishment of Madame Givry de la Roncière in the Champs Elysées; that she had organised numerous hot suppers in the dormitory, the preparation of one of which surreptitious banquets had nearly set the school on fire; and that she had blown up the bust of the sainted M. de Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambrai, which stood in the garden, with gunpowder. She was the delight of her school-fellows; but the diswigged dancing-master called her "*une belle mégère*." Madame Givry de la Roncière bore with her eccentricities, for the quarterly bills sent to her papa, and so punctually settled by his solicitor at St. Becketsbury, were very large, and made her a valuable pupil; but after the departure of the Honourable Miss Salusbury, the much-suffering schoolmistress spoke of her privately, only as "*cette petite diablesse*," and in public, warned her flock against the example

of "*la conduite inconcevablement dévergondée d'une demoiselle que la convenance m'empêche de nommer.*"

The Honourable Letitia had, as a child, always had her own way; and she was not likely to abandon it on coming to woman's estate. Her papa was very old, and adored her. She returned all his love with interest, but that did not hinder her from tyrannising over him in a manner quite as good-natured as it was arbitrary. She had been, at school, and with the exception of her brief probation under the curate who stammered, a very close imitation of a dunce; but on her return to England she began to read with much avidity. The bent of her literary studies was peculiar. She had a healthy scorn for French romances, and esteemed them all, from beginning to end, as so much vicious humbug. The historians, essayists, and moralists, whose bulky tomes graced the morocco-valanced shelves of her father's library, she classed, generically, as "old fogies," and she kept fishhooks in a very splendidly bound copy of *Elegant Extracts*. Nor did our English three-volume novels, mainly relating to the cultivation of the affections among the upper classes of society, please her any more than the little *brochures*, full of paper poison, which are so plentiful in Paris. "Trash," "rubbish," and "rigmarole" the Honourable Letitia Salusbury called the staple products of the circulating library at St. Becketbury. But, for the enlivening works of Captain Marryat and the other nautical novelists, and for the *Ingoldsby Legends*, Miss Salusbury took an immense liking. She had the dreadful heresy to declare all poetry—except it was "funny"—a bore; but she luxuriated in the perusal of Nimrod's *Sporting Sketches*. She yawned over Sir Walter Scott,

and intimated her opinion that Diana Vernon was a designing minx, who only put on a riding-habit to hook Frank Osbaldistone; but I much fear that she had heard of a work written by the late Mr. Pierce Egan, and called *Boxiana*. It is terrible to tell, but the Honourable Letitia Salusbury was an assiduous student of *Ruff's Guide to the Turf* and the *Racing Calendar*. You see that I wish to extenuate nothing of her faults; but in order that nothing may be set down in malice concerning her, I must, while admitting that she did shoot, fish, hunt, drive,—tandem occasionally,—and bet, deny in the most unqualified manner what has been averred by the malevolent, viz. that the Honourable Letitia Salusbury smoked cigars and drank brandy-and-water. As to her conversation, you will be enabled to judge of its tenor; and as to another accusation which has been brought against her, of swearing, you may be sure that, if Miss Salusbury did now and then rap out an ugly word, I shall always, for good manners' sake, suppress it.

I say that she was not beautiful, but was still comely to look upon. She had great flashing brown eyes and a quantity of vagrant brown hair, which was ordinarily thrust into a net, or tumbled off her forehead anyhow. She had a great deal too much colour—at least, of that colour which is not sold by the perfumers, and that won't rub off. Her mouth would have been handsome had it been a little smaller. Her teeth were very white, but they were large and square. Her nose wavered between the mild *retroussé* and the decided snub. But her whole face beamed with candour, happiness, and good-nature, and these amply redeemed the irregularity of her features. Her figure, for all its

plumpness, was graceful and supple, and she was as agile as a squirrel. Nobody could precisely say that Miss Salusbury was masculine, although she delighted and excelled in most of the pursuits and the exercises of men. No; she was *not* masculine, and yet she had, it must be confessed, something of the Amazon of the Cirque about her, with a more considerable admixture of a good-looking milkmaid. It is very improper to say so. No doubt it is unpardonable to unveil a heroine who, albeit she was a peer's daughter, frequently spoke of money as "tin," of a carriage as a "trap," of a gentleman as a fellow." She could not help it, she said, when remonstrated with by Magdalen. It was her way. There was no harm in it, and she hated humbug. So, as it was her way, there was but one course open, and that was to let her have it.

I have hinted that the papa of this young lady, who knew quite as much about horses, dogs, rats, and badgers as one of her own grooms, was a peer of the realm. You may take down your peerage and look for Chalkstonehengist (Viscount). Jehan de Salusbury did good service at Agincourt. Sir Mulciber Salusbury, of Chalkstonehengist, was summoned as a baron to Henry the Eighth's first parliament. The Salusburies fought on the King's side during the civil wars, and the possessor of the title was made a Viscount at the Restoration. "*Le roy, la foy, la loy,*" was the Salusbury motto. The Lord Chalkstonehengist, regnant, was a very old gentleman, born while the American War was at its hottest. He was the most consistent, but the mildest and most benevolent, of Tories of the old school. He spoke of the Reform Bill as "that grievous error in legislation," and of the Reformers as

“gentlemen who hold the pernicious doctrines of Mr. Hunt and Mr. Cobbett.” A bitter Tory lord held his proxy, for Lord Chalkstonehengist seldom made his appearance in the senate-house. He wore a blue coat and brass buttons, low-crowned white hat and top-boots. He had not forgotten his scholarship, and the composition of Latin verses sometimes served to while away an odd hour. It was even said that he had been engaged for years in writing a history of the American War, in which the Stamp Act was incontrovertibly defended, and Mr. Washington very hardly dealt by. Until years and infirmities had overtaken him, he had been an enthusiast in the sports of the field; and it was with an irrepressible pleasure, mingled with an odd sensation that the thing wasn't exactly proper, that he heard of the daring deeds of his daughter, in riding 'cross country, leaping gates and clearing ditches. For Miss Salusbury was in all respects a worthy descendant of the old monastic huntress, Dame Juliana Berners; and, from her own practical experience, could have capped the sporting wisdom of the noble lady who wrote

“Wheresoever ye fare by fryth or by fell
My dere chylde take heede how Trystram do you tell
How manie manere bestys of venerie there were,
Lysten to youre dame, and she shalle you lere:
Four maner bestys of venerie there are,—
The fyrst of them the harte, the second is the hare;
The boore is one of tho: the wulfe and not one more.”

—only, Dame Letitia Salusbury would have taken away the “boore” and the “wulfe,” and added the fox.

Father and daughter lived pleasantly and comfortably enough in their old house on the older estate of Chalkstonehengist, about a mile and a quarter from

The Casements. Lord Chalkstonehengist was not very rich, but had enough and to spare. His high Tory predilections did not prevent him from being kind, hospitable, and benevolent, to his neighbours, to his tenants, and to the poor. As a landlord he was of the most liberal, and, although he preserved his game in moderation, never refused a farmer a day's shooting. As a magistrate he was of the most merciful. They used to tell a story of one Giles Conybeare, an incorrigible poacher, who was brought before his lordship sitting in petty sessions. It was about the twenty-fifth time that Giles had so fallen into trouble for wilful contravention of the Game Laws. His lordship put on his sternest expression of countenance, which at the worst was but dove-like. "Here again, Giles Conybeare," he thundered, or at least tried to thunder. "Were I your lordship, I should make an example of him," whispered the clerk. "Yes," answered the noble magistrate, "an example, certainly—an example must be made of Giles Conybeare." "For the sake of the public," whispered the clerk. "For the sake of the public," his lordship repeated. The wretched Giles began to blubber. He could not deny that he had been taken red-handed, with one pocket full of hares, and the other full of springes; but he pleaded his grandmother bedridden with the "rheumatiz," his own want of employment, his large family. For Giles was a philoprogenitive poacher, and had no less than eleven children. "It makes his offence worse," murmured the clerk *sotto voce*. "All this only aggravates your offence, prisoner," said his lordship aloud; and he went on to tell the captive that he ought to be hanged, that he ought to be transported; that he was a dis-

grace to the village, to the estate, to the country, and so forth. Wurzel, the steward, inclined his head towards the bench, and delivered a pitiable character of Giles from behind his hand. The prisoner could only continue to blubber, to wring his handcuffed hands, and to talk about his bedridden grandmother and his eleven children.

“This must be put a stop to,” continued his lordship, glancing with benign severity at the culprit. “I’ll—no, I won’t. How many children did he say he had? Eleven! Ah, dear me! And his grandmother bedridden, too. And no work. Ah! poor fellow. I—I’ll give him a pig. Wurzel, give him a pig,” quoth Lord Chalkstonehengist, throwing himself back in his arm-chair. You may understand from this that his lordship was not unlikely to be a somewhat indulgent parent.

“And what answer did you return to this lovelorn swain?” said Miss Salusbury, breaking a somewhat irksome silence which had ensued.

“I told him,” Magdalen replied, “that I should feel it my duty to acquaint my brother—I mean Ernest—with his conduct, if he presumed to repeat it.”

“Well, that wasn’t very encouraging; but it’s an answer that may cut both ways. Appeals to one’s brother may mean anything. Don’t you remember the story of the young lady in Australia—I should like to go to Australia—who wrote just this in a book, and left it, quite by accident of course, in the way of a bashful swain, ‘If he doesn’t propose to-morrow, I’ll get my brother to thrash him?’”

"I must beg you, Miss Salusbury—" interrupted Magdalen, looking up from her work—

"I must beg you, my dear Maggy," retorted the daughter of the House of Chalkstonehengist, "to remember that there is nothing, after all, so wonderful in the conduct of Mr. Pendragon. He is a gentleman of good family, and although he is only a curate now, why, bless us, he may be made Archbishop of Canterbury some fine morning."

"He had the miserable vanity to tell me as much. He vaunted his poverty, and said that he would hew steps out of the rock of knowledge, whereby to mount to fame and fortune."

"I think I've heard that before," Miss Salusbury remarked with semi-gravity. "It sounds like poetry. I hope it isn't; for I hate poetry, except when it's jolly; and I should be sorry if Pendragon turned out a humbug. Did you ever hear the 'Ratcatcher's Daughter,' Maggy? I made Willy Goldthorpe sing it to me the last time he came over from St. Becketsbury."

It is scarcely necessary to say that Lord Chalkstonehengist's daughter was an immense favourite with young men, both of sporting tendency and the military profession, who voted Lady Talmash a dragon, and Magdalen Hill a snowball. She was declared to be a stunner, a screamer, an out-and-outer,—all kinds of superlatives of admiration were applied to her. She was perfectly frank and unrestrained with the young men. They would have liked to elect her an honorary member of the cavalry mess at St. Becketsbury. At the cover-side her gray riding-habit, and the red feather in her cap, were as well known as Lord Chalk-

stonehengist's white pony,—he could not follow the hounds now, but liked to see the meet and chat with his neighbours,—or as Farmer Turmut's big brown horse with the star on his forehead. She tolerated smoking after permission had been asked; but woe betide the luckless wight who lit his cigar without leave being granted, or who by word or deed took a liberty with the Honourable Letitia Salusbury! An unhappy cornet, raw to the service, was once rash enough to chaff her, whereupon the daughter of Chalkstonehengist pulled his ears till they were as crimson as his sash, flung his undress cap out of window, and bade him follow it, or she would make him, she added significantly. You could not take a liberty with her, although she did know the "Ratcatcher's Daughter," and had besides an astounding *répertoire* of ballads and melodies more popular than refined. The Onzeport hounds met near St. Becketsbury, and Letitia rode regularly to them. There had come down a certain celebrated sportswoman—who but the famous Miss Southbank indeed!—who sometimes hunted other animals besides hares and foxes. She thought it would be capital fun to engage the eccentric daughter of Lord Chalkstonehengists in conversation. Up rode the dashing Southbank, splendid in a scarlet riding-habit, spatter-dashed with patent leather, with the big diamond horseshoe given to her by Lord Racquetborough, just previous to his insolvency, at her throat, and the riding-whip with the emerald handle presented to her by that well-known sporting blade, Charley Pettycash, who kept so many race-horses, theatres, and dancers, who spent so many thousands a year, and who, when he was transported for life for his innumer-

able forgeries, turned out to have been all along a clerk in a bank with 150*l.* a year salary. Up rode the Southbank, saucy and radiant, on her noted black mare "Shiny Face." I wonder the horse had not a jewelled surcingle. His mistress was always covered with splendour, and jewels, and shame; and every one of her gewgaws had some history of sin or of folly connected with it. The Southbank presumed to "pass the time of day" to Miss Salusbury, and to ask her whether she meant to put the pot on for the Metropolitan? Letitia started back so as nearly to throw her steed on his haunches, and, trembling with passion, made this reply, "You are an abandoned hussy. I know all about you; and if you dare to speak to me again, I'll cut your wicked face in two with my whip." The Southbank was not very remarkable for placidity of temper, but she was somehow cowed as much by Miss Salusbury's manner as by the matter of her answer. She rode away quite crest-fallen, and at the Onzeport hounds was seen no more. She alluded subsequently to Letitia as an "uppish party," but without bitterness. The Southbank was sensible. Of course the blame of having incited her to address Letitia was laid at the door of Puffin, the wretched cornet, who had had his ears pulled. She vainly denied the charge; but it did not much matter. Some months afterwards that well-remembered and eccentric captain of dragoons, Lord Snowstorm, having rendered Puffin's life a burden to him by cutting up hair-brushes in his bed, filling his boots with coal-tar, charging his cigars with moistened gunpowder, corking his face, and shaving off one of his whiskers, the cornet's mamma indignantly interfered, and caused her

darling to sell his commission, and quit the wicked, depraved service, just after Lord Snowstorm had been turned out of it by the Commander-in-Chief.

Letitia and Magdalen were very good friends; but the intimacy was one-sided. William the dragoon was a favourite with the Amazon, and she extended her fondness to Miss Hill; drove over two or three times to see her, invited her to Chalkstonehengist much oftener than Miss Hill chose to come, and persisted in calling her Maggy. But the haughty illuminator never went beyond "Miss Salusbury" in addressing her.

The subject of the curate was anything but an agreeable one; but Letitia, for some capricious reason of her own, continued to press it.

"Well," she went on. "He did repeat his 'conduct,' as you call it, didn't he?"

"He wrote," Magdalen replied, with cold severity.

"And you—"

"Returned his letter. More than that, I felt it my duty to carry out my threat. I made my brother—I made Ernest acquainted with the affair."

"In other words, you tried to get this poor curate the sack," the unaffected Letitia remarked. "That wasn't very kind-hearted of you, Maggy. And what did the reverend say?"

"He agreed with me that I was not to be insulted with impunity."

"Insulted! where's the insult?"

"Miss Salusbury!" Magdalen exclaimed in proud surprise, and with a positive blush on her pale face.

"Miss Hill!" the other rejoined, mimicking her. "Dear Maggy," she continued, "you are a good girl, after all, although you are as proud as a dog with two

tails,"—whence the Honourable Miss Salusbury gathered her prolific collection of similes was always a matter of intense surprise. "What great offence has Pendragon committed? You are both young. He is a clergyman and a gentleman. You are a lady. Surely you can strike a balance between High Church and Low Church. You can't go on for ever moping here, and grizzling about that poor dear Hugh Goldthorpe."

"You forget my position," Magdalen said, in a sad low voice.

"Well, I do perhaps. I forgot that you had a fortune. But what does that matter? Is Pendragon the first man who has wanted to marry a rich woman? Don't you remember the old lines?

"Cloth of frize, be not too bold
If thou art match'd with cloth of gold:
Cloth of gold, do not despise
If thou art match'd with cloth of frize."

Besides," she added, "I don't think that Bruin is mercenary after all."

"No, indeed," quoth Magdalen, half to herself.

"Then why not have him. Better to be a curate's wife than a lonely spinster, painting away at those everlasting saints and martyrs with their heads on one side, and worrying yourself about High Church and Low Church and Ernest Goldthorpe, who would be a good fellow enough if he didn't wear swanshot in his shoes, and live on pickled eggs and boiled soda-water."

Again, and at the mention of the rector's name, Magdalen blushed. "I declare," continued Miss Salusbury, "that if Bruin asked me, I'd marry him myself, and beg papa to get him made something better than

a curate; though for the matter of that, I think Pendragon would do best in the Life Guards. I'm getting tired of the life I lead. It's very jolly, but it's lonely. I don't seem to know where I'm going. I suppose nobody does. Sometimes, when I'm reading *Bell's Life*, I seem to fancy that I should like to be a man. They have a good many advantages over us, those men. Why can't I play at nurr and spell, and walk a thousand miles in a thousand hours? Why can't I match my novice to fight any man in England, bar the 'Mumper'—who is the Mumper?—at catch-weight for a hundred pounds a side? Why can't I show toy-dogs? or patronise the noble sport of ratting? or frequent the Bendigo's Head, where *Boxiana* is kept at the bar, and gloves are always ready for the convenience of gentlemen? Why can't I go to the festive board, where harmony prevails, and the eccentric Joey Jones is in the chair? Who is Joey Jones, and why is he eccentric, and called Joey? and is he a broker's man, that he is always taking the chair? I should like to be a man. No; I should like to be a Bloomer, or Dr. Elizabeth Johnson, or Madame Ida Pfeiffer, and travel the whole world over; or Richard Carr, the female sailor. What a brick Grace Darling was? I wonder whether Joan of Arc's armour hurt her. I tried on one of the old helmets in our hall the other day, and had a frightful headache for hours afterwards. Perhaps the best thing to do would be to marry somebody."

"I think so too," responded Magdalen, glancing with solemn pity at this misguided young woman.

"The difficulty is to find somebody. The daughter and heiress of Lord Chalkstonehengist can't go to the

barracks at St. Becketbury, and say, Messieurs of the dragoons, or gentlemen of the Onzeport hunt, will you marry me? I can't pickle and I can't preserve. I can't play and I can't sing, but I can leap a five-barred gate, make the best flies in Kent, and shoot a trout in the water. Heigho!"

"Truly, the daughter of Lord Chalkstonehengist could not do this; but might she not find pursuits more in keeping with her rank in life, and to that which society expects from her?"

"Society is all humbug," cried the Honourable Miss Salusbury, in something like a passion; "and I've tried all the pursuits in keeping with my rank in life, and they're all botheration."

"There remains marriage as a resource open to you; and surely, if the gentleman in whom you take so great an interest—"

"Pickles!" exclaimed the Honourable Miss Salusbury. Her expletives were positively unprecedented in lack of refinement. "My honest persuasion is, that if I let Pendragon know that I liked him, he would calmly tell me that he didn't want to have anything to say to me. I know the man. Besides, I was but jesting about him. He is and can be nothing to me. You know that he is over head and ears in love with you, Maggy; and cold and angry with him as you seem, I can't help fancying—"

"It is too late," said Magdalen, poisoning her brush, and resolutely driving a spike into the bosom of a martyr on the vellum before her. "Ernest knows all. He was justly shocked and indignant. He summoned Mr. Pendragon before him. High words passed be-

tween them only yesterday; and I believe that Mr. Pendragon will shortly leave this part of the country."

"Then, I'm very sorry for it; and the fat's all in the fire," Miss Salusbury remarked, and rising in dudgeon. "I shall go home to lunch; will you come? I've got the trap and the two piebalds on the lawn. St. Gengulphus the Great can wait a couple of hours for his eyebrows," she concluded, glancing in great disdain at the spiked martyr.

Magdalen sadly shook her head, and declined the offer.

"Then I'm off. Good-bye, Maggy. Why don't you turn nun, or Sister of Charity, or something of that sort? You might be a martyr then yourself, without the trouble of painting whole armies of them on parchment. Bye, bye."

"A nun or a Sister of Charity," repeated Magdalen, when, having coldly returned the good-natured shake of the hand which her easily-pacified friend had proffered her, the door had closed upon the Honourable Miss Salusbury. "A nun or a Sister of Charity! why not, indeed?" And she went on very carefully and deliberately marking in the eyebrows of St. Gengulphus the Great.

"Poor Pendragon!"

Who said "poor Pendragon?" Letitia Salusbury or Magdalen Hill? You see the words are between inverted commas, so the exclamation can't be mine.

The Amazon's "trap," a pretty little phaeton, with two prettier piebald ponies, and a diminutive groom in gray-and-black livery, and perhaps the tiniest buckskins and top-boots ever seen since the visit of General Tom Thumb to this country, awaited their

mistress on the lawn before The Casements. Letitia was very anxious before she took the reins, and settled herself on the high cushion of the vehicle, to know if Twitters had had his beer. Twitters was the Lilliputian groom; and he, smacking his lips, made answer that he had had a pint of the right sort, but that it might have been a trifle older. Miss Salusbury delighted in this Twitters. He was so charmingly wicked, she said. He was, indeed, a most precocious imp. He betted; his talk was essentially "horsy;" he was the proprietor of a terrier which could be backed to kill a maximum of rats in a minimum of minutes, and which had been favourably noticed in the sporting journals; and when his mistress was at a loss for a line in the "Ratcatcher's Daughter," she would turn round to Twitters and seek his infallible aid.

Chalkstonehengist was towards St. Becketbury, and thither the Amazon drove at a smart trot. Just where another road turns off in the direction of Tiburnhurst is a blackened and jagged stump of timber; and here, according to the legend, once stood the gibbet where, a hundred and fifty years ago, had swung in a grisly apparatus of chains the corpse of an atrocious murderer. By this spot of ill omen there stood a short, broad-shouldered man with his arms folded. He raised his hat, and, with a grim bow, would have turned down the Tiburnhurst road, but for the adjuration of "Hillo there!" by which Miss Salusbury commanded him to stop.

"Why, it's Pendragon," she cried. "Come over to the house and have some lunch. Don't stand staring there, man, like a stuck pig. Get in."

No other young lady in the neighbourhood would

have dared to ask a clergyman to enter the phaeton which she was driving; and had any dared to do so the pendulum of scandal would have so incessantly wagged between Swordsley and St. Becketsbury, that one might have thought the perpetual motion had been discovered. But Miss Salusbury frankly owned that she did not care one brass farthing for public opinion, and that she would do what she liked when she liked. There was perhaps some consideration due to what might be said concerning the curate's acceptance of the proposition; but ladies who do as they like are not much in the habit of considering the interests of other people. At any other time, Ruthyn Pendragon would have felt bound to decline the invitation. As it was, perhaps for sundry good reasons of his own, he chose to accept it now, and took his seat beside Miss Salusbury. As he said never a word, that young lady chose to inform him that he was as "grumpy" as ever. Then she adjured the piebalds to "come up." Then she entered into a short conversation with Twitters relative to a new collar for Betty the near piebald, and the propriety of putting a kicking-strap on Harlequin the off one;—he was vicious when separated from his companion—when she drove him in the tax-cart. For the Honourable Letitia delighted in driving a neat vehicle under duty, on the conspicuous sides of which were painted the style and titles of Lancelot Brian De Crux Salusbury, Viscount Chalkstonehengist, of Chalkstonehengist, Kent.

They reached the house, and had lunch; the Amazon proving by ocular demonstration that she had a keen appetite for game-pie, and fully understood the flavour of old Madeira. Then she took the curate to her own

little boudoir, with the carved oak fittings and the walls hung with antlers, brushes, guns, fishing-rods, eel-spears, whips, spurs, and similar sporting gear.

"We don't allow pipes here," she said quite gravely, and without the slightest touch of irony. "Papa even objected to Mr. Neilgherry's hubble-bubble. You know;—the yellow man who was so long in India, and talks about pig-sticking and tiger-hunting so well, though every other word he says is a crammer, I do believe. You can have a cigar, if you like; but, for my part, I think they make the curtains smell much worse than pipes do. Mrs. Major Kanaster at St. Becketsbury says so too."

Pendragon, who had not spoken ten words since he entered the house, respectfully declined the cigar. He had definitively given up smoking, he said.

"Is there anything else you have given up," asked Letitia, in a dry voice.

"I am going away," he said, for all explanation.

"Then you've had a quarrel"—she was nearly saying a "row"—"with the reverend."

"It is so," he answered, bowing his head sadly.

"Where are you going?"

"To London."

"What to do?" It is melancholy to have to record it, but Letitia was within an ace of asking "what's your game?"

"To work."

"That's right," said the heiress. "I only wish I could work at something. And so you are going. Poor old Pendragon. Poor old fellow. I know all about it. Give us your hand."

She held out her honest palm and left it in the

curate's grasp, while he pressed it long and cordially. He looked in her face, and saw nothing in that wild, wilful face but truth and generosity. He would have liked to have kissed her.

"You are a good woman," he murmured, going towards the door. "God bless you."

"Stop," cried Letitia hastily; "London's a long way off, Pendragon, and the pigs have left off running ready roasted through the streets. Do you want any money?"

"I have enough and to spare," the curate made answer, after expressing his gratitude for the offer.

"Well, if you ever do want any money," she resumed, "write to me, under cover to papa. You *will* go? Well, good-bye, Pendragon."

She gave him her hand again, and again he pressed it and departed. She watched him long from her window striding towards the spot where she had met him. When his form had disappeared, she took up a book,—it was Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes*,—and tried to read, but the letters danced before her eyes, and she flung the volume down. Then she took up a parchment portfolio and ran through her collection of salmon flies, gorgeous in pheasants' feathers and yellow floss silk and golden wire. And then she threw herself into a chair, and burst into a passionate fit of weeping.

"A good cry always does me good when I've got the blues," she said, drying her eyes. "Poor Pendragon! I wish I was a man, or a dressmaker, or a charwoman, or a fairy, or anything else that would enable me to help him; but it's no good; and now I think I'll go and see how Brindle gets on." Brindle

was the newest-imported Alderney calf in the byre, and the Honourable Miss Salusbury forthwith proceeded to inspect him.

As for the curate, he walked passed the old gibbet stump and past The Casements, towards whose glancing windows he never looked, and to his lodgings in Swordsley village. His rent was paid. His chattels had already been sent to St. Becketsbury Station, and thence to one farther up the line towards London. He purposed to reach the station by a circuitous route of about eight miles. There was no leave-taking to be got through. He had strictly enjoined his landlady to keep his departure a secret for at least twenty minutes after he was clear of the town; and the good woman, who loved him, promised to obey. Words of hot displeasure, of furious wrath, had passed between him and Ernest. Each had said things which he would gladly have recalled. It was too late now. The notice he might have demanded had been foregone by mutual consent. The curate was paid the balance of his wages, and was free to go wheresoever he listed.

The station he was bound for was Tiburnhurst; but by a long walk round he could reach it without retracing his steps and passing The Casements again. He had to leave the Church of St. Mary-la-Douce, which lay at the back of the village, to his left. He halted as he wound round the grassy knoll on whose summit the timeworn fabric stood.

"In that grey and crumbling fane," the curate murmured low, as with arms folded he gazed long and earnestly at the church, "I have prayed and I have preached, when my lord the rector would grant me his high permission. There I have married, and buried,

and christened. There is no grave in that yard that holds a corpse more dead than I am to that which I once was. And my lord rector and my lady Magdalen have trampled on the wretched curate, have they? Old Church," he finished, raising his right hand almost menacingly, "the struggle is henceforth between you and me."

And so Ruthyn Pendragon turned his face away from the Church of England, and went on his journey, whitherwards he deemed best. And I have heard a wise man say that what is said to be done for Conscience' sake is often done for spite.

CHAPTER XII.

No Science to Mr. Sims is a Mystery.

It was on a Tuesday in the month of May, 1851; and Mr. Sims, having business to transact in Coger's Inn, Strand, betook himself thither at about ten o'clock on a sunshiny morning. He eyed those who passed him, as was his wont, narrowly; yet he seemed with his bent-down eyes to be occupied in counting the number of iron plates in the pavement that covered the coal-holes. It should be mentioned that Mr. Sims was accustomed to wear a broad-brimmed hat, which was convenient for many reasons, and that his eyes possessed the faculty of looking round corners.

Sixteen months, or thereabouts, had elapsed since we last had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Sims; and he was then going to the play. He was bent on the same errand now, although the theatres do not usually open their doors at ten o'clock in the morning. But the whole of human life was a play to Mr. Sims, and he

was always, to use a Gallicism, "assisting" at the representations of the Theatre Royal Humanity. He did not care to be a conspicuous actor on the noisy stage thereof. He was content to be Signor N. N., *non nominato*, as the Opera play-bills call the illustrious incogniti who, in a bar and a half of recitative, announce that the coach is at the door, or that the fatal hour has arrived. Or rather he liked to be prompter, or to have the care of the trap-door department, or to stand patiently at the wing with a pan of blue fire, waiting to light up the last scene with a lurid glare.

Time had not thinned the flowing locks of Mr. Sims. He had none that flowed for the Great Gleaner to operate upon. Nature had provided him with a close-set and spiky black caul of hair much resembling a horsehair cushion. Time had inserted, since January '50, a few thousand spikes of rusty grey among the sable stubble, and on the crown of his head had mown a little circular tonsure quite bald. His nose was a little more peaked, and a trifle more purple in hue, and that was all.

Mr. Sims came from the west, and set his watch by the Horse Guards. The watch very much resembled the model of a potato in silver, and the disc which prudent housewives sometimes slice off that esculent, to allow the steam to escape while boiling, was represented by the dial. It had belonged to a railway engine-driver, and to it was attached a history. At the corner of St. Martin's Lane it is on record that Mr. Sims purchased a pennyworth of apples. There is nothing so very strange in this fact; but it may be just hinted that Mr. Sims entered into a somewhat lengthy conversation with the fruit-seller, who was an

Irishwoman of the purest growth, and earned a considerable addition to her weekly income by colouring cutty pipes for gentlemen whose heads were too weak to allow them to swallow about an ounce of nicotine every day. A clean pipe, half a pound of the strongest tobacco, half-a-crown, and a week's fair smoking, given to Biddy M'Grath, and she would colour a cutty for you as black as my hat.

"Five times within a fortnight, eh?" said Mr. Sims, as he turned down King William Street. "For watching closely, and never losing a minute, there's nothing like an apple-woman. She never moves, and nobody suspects her. For following, give me an orange-girl." So you see that Mr. Sims did business even as he walked.

In Mid-Strand Mr. Sims held brief parley with a Hansom cabman, which ended in that charioteer giving him a ticket, receiving a shilling, laying his forefinger by the side of his nose, and driving on. Had Mr. Sims designed to take a drive anywhere, and had he suddenly changed his mind? At all events, he reached Coger's Inn on foot, and entering the open doorway of No. 20, mounted briskly to the third floor.

Coger's Inn is not in the Strand, but off it, and is about the dingiest, rottenest old inn of Chancery in the metropolis. It should have been pulled down a century since; but as, let out in tenements, it realises a considerable and tolerably safe annual rental, its proprietors—whoever they may be—have excellent reasons for allowing it to stand. The windows are never cleaned; the staircases are never swept; the mangy old courtyard is never weeded or rolled. It is a sandy desert in fine weather, and a miry puddle in wet

weather. It was a place of legal habitations once, but very few men of the law care to abide in it now. Its tenants are all cloudy and mysterious. They come nobody knows whence, and go nobody knows where. They have slips of foolscap pasted on their doors, saying that they will be "back in five minutes;" return in ten years, paste a fresh slip over the old one, saying that they will be "back in a quarter of an hour," and never return at all. Letters fall through the slits of the door, and moulder away there; cats die of starvation, and the crannies of lonely chambers are fusty with the skeletons of mice. It would be a bold flea that took up his quarters within those pinched precincts, thinking to live on the fat of the land, or of the lodgers, and hoping to drink his pint of blood a day like a gentleman. Coger's Inn was the very place to suit Mr. Sims, and for that reason he had chambers there.

The third-floor back, No. 20, had a huge outer door, which was a mass of knobs and staples, and iron bands and plates, and great cross-beams of oak. You might have murdered a man behind that door, and nobody on the staircase would have been the wiser for it; nor if, by holding the ear to the letter-slit, the screams of the dying man had been heard, could any one without a dozen sledge-hammers, or an engineer's petard, have burst the massive portal open. When Mr. Sims had reached this door, and produced his latch-key, he tapped one of the iron plates approvingly with that instrument, remarking, in a satisfied undertone, that it (meaning the door) was uncommonly strong, and quiet, and safe. The key looked large enough to have fitted the great door of Newgate, and

to it, by a piece of red tape, was attached a tiny little Chubb that might have opened a lady's portfolio or a pocket-ledger. Mr. Sims applied the big key, which made a noise of mingled ferocity and anger as it was turned twice or thrice round in the lock, and so passed into his chambers. It has been omitted to state, that in the midst of the mass of iron and oak forming the door was painted in faded white letters the name of "Filoe and Co." Whether Mr. Sims was Filoe and Co., or Filoe and Co. had once lived there, but had left the place a quarter of a century since, or the day before yesterday, is uncertain and immaterial.

There was an inner door, panelled, smooth, and knockerless, and with the minutest of keyholes, to which Mr. Sims applied his Chubb, and was fairly within his premises. He who was behind the smooth-panelled door might have seen that it was backed by one solid sheet of iron. "An Englishman's house is his castle," soliloquised Mr. Sims; "and, egad, I think Coger's Castle would stand a pretty strong siege."

Mr. Sims's chambers comprised three rooms, each with a single window, through whose infinitely dirty panes could be faintly descried an agreeable perspective of roofs and chimney-pots. For this was the third-floor back, and the background of Coger's Inn was Cadger's Market. The rooms were *en suite*; and as Mr. Sims stood at the first one he heard a great noise of scuffling and stamping, the clatter of some metallic substance, and the sound of a human voice crying,

"Saha! Saha! there! Come on, three, six, twelve of you! Come on, ye wolves! Buffalmacco the Ruthless never yields!"

Mr. Sims did not seem in the least disconcerted

by this strange discourse, but entered the room, which was low and dusty, very bare of furniture, but, with what little there was, of a counting-house character; and in the centre of whose carpetless floor stood a tall youth about seventeen, marked with the small-pox, and endowed with a shock head of hair of the hue that may be called a fine sunset, inasmuch that it was flaming red. He was stamping very violently on the deal boards, and brandishing an old broadsword, and occasionally dealing a sounding thwack to an office-desk, adjuring some imaginary enemy, by the name of Spadacapo, to "come on."

"At it again, Buff," Mr. Sims tranquilly remarked. "Where are the letters, and has anybody called?"

"Buffalmacco the Ruthless," or Buff, as by default of any better name I must call him, was almost breathless with excitement and the broadsword exercise. He did not appear at all ashamed in being detected in his strange occupation, but, leaning on the hilt of his weapon, informed his master that there was a heap of letters in the next room, and that nobody had called except the Gas, who had looked at the meter, and found they had only burned eighteenpennyworth during the last quarter.

"And quite enough, too, Buff," Mr. Sims cheerfully remarked. "When gas is given away, we will burn more of it. As I'm going to be very busy for the next hour, you will oblige me by suspending your infernal row during that period; after which, I will see anybody who calls."

Mr. Sims passed through the second room, which was entirely empty, unless a huge splash of ink in the middle of the floor could be called furniture. He en-

tered the third room, his own private *sanctum*, and carefully locked the door, leaving, according to his already-mentioned principle, the key therein. Buffal-macco the Ruthless, being temporarily prohibited from indulging in the broadsword exercise, betook himself to his library, which, in a very greasy, tattered, and coverless condition, stood on a shelf by the window, and consisted of copies of the exciting dramas of *The Castle Spectre*, *Jonathan Bradford*, and *The Iron Chest*, an odd volume of the *Newgate Calendar*, the *Sam-Hall Songster*, and sundry numbers of a thrilling romance entitled *Murder Castle; or, the Heads of the Headless*. Buff had commenced taking in *The Hatchet of Horror; or, Love and Madness*; but he found *Murder Castle* more attractive, and so dropped *The Hatchet*.

"An invaluable boy, that," Mr. Sims said, taking off his plain black frock, and donning a dressing-gown of grey striped flannel. "He lives in the realms of fancy and the Victoria Theatre. His wages enable him to go four times a week to the upper gallery, and he is happy. He could rob me if he liked very conveniently, but he is scrupulously honest. So long as he has enough for the gallery, thousands might pass through his hands without a penny sticking to his fingers. I know it, for time out of mind I have laid traps for him. Here's one, for instance." And from a pyramid of at least two hundred and fifty penny-post letters Sims turned up one, the seal of which he carefully broke, and, from several thicknesses of paper in the envelope, took out twenty-four postage-stamps. Mr. Sims had himself posted this letter to himself on the preceding afternoon; but he had been careful to have the address written in a strange hand. He usually

tried this little manœuvre about four or five times every week, always selecting a different handwriting, and had never found one of his letters miscarry.

"Here's another little test," muttered Mr. Sims as he opened another letter, and, peering anxiously into its enclosure, took forth, with the greatest caution, a human hair, which he held up for an instant to the light, and then blew away.

"Letters may be unsealed and resealed," thought Mr. Sims; "but if I tell my correspondent, by word of mouth, to pluck out one of his hairs and pop it into the envelope before he sends it, I don't think it very probable that a letter would be opened without the hair being displaced."

Mr. Sims said, luckily, none of this aloud, else Buffalmacco the Ruthless might by chance have heard the things he should not. Mr. Sims addressed himself to his own inner self, and hugged his secrets in his own secretive bosom. He continued opening letters until long past the hour of which he had spoken had expired, when a discreet tap was heard at the door, accompanied by a more discreet cough.

"What is it, Buff?" he asked, opening the door to the red-headed youth.

"She's here," the fencing clerk, if clerk he was, responded, and pointing with his thumb over his left shoulder.

"Phew!" and Mr. Sims gave utterance to a prolonged whistle. "Dear me, Mrs. Clapperton," he continued, pushing past Buff, and eagerly ushering a handsomely-attired lady into his sanctum, "to what may I ascribe the honour of this unexpected visit?"

He knew very well, did Mr. Sims, that the hand-

somely-attired lady's name was not Mrs. Clapperton. Perhaps Buffalmacco the Ruthless knew it quite as well; but it was the invariable practice with Mr. Sims never to address a client who called upon him by his or her proper name. It kept things so snug, he was wont to say. The handsomely-attired lady was a client of Mr. Sims, and her name was Mrs. Armytage. She was out of mourning, and looked prettier than ever.

"Fait-il gros temps dans la chiourme?" asked Mr. Sims,—what necessity was there for him to speak French?—when he had handed the lady to a chair, had locked the door and left the key inside. "Is it business? or is it on purely sentimental grounds that we are come to see our Sims, all in the morning early? Has the obdurate heart at Hoogendracht relented?"

"It is not that," replied Mrs. Armytage; "the heart you speak of is as hard, and I am as wretched as ever."

She looked more scared and terrified than she had done at the room in the hotel that night.

"Then there is a red lamp out; where is the danger?"

"I want five hundred pounds."

"Five hundred jars of pickled gherkins! Why, to my certain knowledge, ma'am, you had five thousand pounds at your banker's only yesterday."

"I know that, but I want five hundred pounds directly: this instant."

"Draw a cheque, then. Here are pens, ink, and paper."

"It's of no use, he won't take it."

"Who won't take it?"

"Sims, I want five hundred pounds. Let me have them at once, for mercy's sake, or all is over."

"Is it a real smash?" Mr. Sims asked searchingly.

"It is ruin and despair. You know that I never lie to you."

"I don't think you do; but you keep back the truth till the last moment, which is quite as bad; and then the train shunts away on the branch line, that leads to smash, and after that we come to our Sims and eat humble pie."

"Will you give me the money?"

"I haven't got it. I've only a bunch of keys, sevenpence half-penny, and half an Abernethy biscuit,—my breakfast, ma'am,—in my pocket, and eight pounds fourteen in postage-stamps. There has been a joyful delivery this morning."

"Draw me a cheque, then."

"You know I never draw cheques myself. I have a blank one, however, with somebody else's name to it; but where's the use of it? He won't take a cheque."

"Yes he will, with a line from you."

"Who will?"

"His man is down stairs."

"Whose?"

"Tigg's."

"Ephraim Tigg of Stockwell!" Mr. Sims repeated, with another prolonged whistle; "I thought so. And so you've found out again that he's a Rasper, have you?"

"Will you let me have the money?"

"I must, ma'am," responded Mr. Sims, shrugging his shoulders. "I can't afford to let the concern go to smash, although, if this kind of business continues,

I shall be obliged to take my capital out of the firm. Why on earth can't you come and see me before you pay that walking museum of the College of Surgeons a visit, instead of afterwards? Did your Sims ever refuse you the genial loan?"

"I can't help it," said Mrs. Armytage, with a murmur that was half a groan.

"I don't think you can," observed Mr. Sims, scanning her from beneath his eyebrows, as from a huge leathern pocket-book he produced a blank cheque and filled it up. "There, Ephraim will take Filoe and Co.'s signature, particularly if I put this upon it."

He made a minute tick in the corner of the cheque, partly with a pen, partly with his nail, and handed the document to her.

"You have a flying pen, ma'am," he observed calmly, "and the bump of imitation ought to be strongly developed somewhere among those pretty curls; but I think that mark will puzzle even *you*, my lady. I suppose you don't want me any more, till the next time; but take care. It's a long lane that has no turning, and, as sure as my name's Des—— Sims, I mean, —the very next thoroughfare on the wrong-hand side is C. C. C. Street."

She had scarcely heard his concluding remark. She crumpled the cheque in her hand, and walked to the door, and was gone.

"Impulse again," Mr. Sims muttered; "I thought so. Five times within a fortnight. *La chiourme chauffe*. If that woman doesn't put a stopper on her impulse, it will most inevitably end in the cultivation of the science of botany in the pleasant bay of that name. Buff," he

continued, "I'm at home to everybody. I think I shall have a harvest this morning."

And Mr. Sims went on opening letters, and taking out postage-stamps.

CHAPTER XIII.

Embarrassments of a Rich Young Man.

It is but weary work opening letters; but when every other one or so contains from half a dozen to half a crown's worth of postage-stamps, the operation becomes profitable, and the labour may be borne. Mr. Sims got through his work quite cheerfully, and whistled as he went, not certainly for want of thought, but as a little accompaniment to a pleasant task. Now and then he came upon a letter which contained, not postage-stamps, but a coin carefully stuck in a card or secured under a seal,—now a sixpence, now a shilling, and now actually a half-sovereign; and at the discovery of such a treasure Mr. Sims would shake his head: in a very placable manner, however.

"When *will* the public learn common prudence and caution?" asked Mr. Sims, suspending his whistling, and carefully pocketing a golden effigy of her Majesty, which for greater security had been carefully wrapped up in a piece of soft paper crumpled enough as to texture, and oleaginous enough as to surface to warrant the surmise that it had originally served as a confining locket for the tresses of some unknown Pyrrha. "Are the repeated warnings of the Postmaster-General, are the innumerable convictions at the C. C. C., are the pleasing pamphlets of the Ordinary of Newgate—

‘A double Rap at the Postman’s Conscience,’ and so forth,—of no avail? It is wicked, it is cruel, to send coin by post. You mus’n’t send leeches, and you mus’n’t send lucifer-matches, and you mus’n’t send sucking-pigs, and you decidedly oughtn’t to send money. It places undue temptations in the way of the humble and ill-remunerated postman, and it wears out the letter-boxes. Besides,” he continued, slipping three fourpenny-pieces into his waistcoat-pocket, “money may be marked, may be sent for sinister objects, and may lead to unpleasant revelations concerning one’s little business transactions before the stipendiary magistrates. Hum: what have we here?”

No postage-stamps had to be taken out this time. A common, cheap, salmon-coloured envelope being opened, disgorged a piece of coarse sugar-paper, in which were rather crammed than folded at least a dozen halves of what seemed to be five and ten pound notes of the Bank of England. Mr. Sims carefully took account of the numbers of these documents; then as carefully lighted a little taper, walked to the hearth, set the notes on fire, watched them crackle into flame and smoulder into black powder, embossed here and there with “five” and “ten” in grey gothic, and finally stamped and ground them with his heel into an impalpable smear of dust.

“Plenty more where they come from,” he softly remarked, walking back to his letters; “but those half-notes will never find their brothers and sisters, I fancy, nor call out for gum-water.”

Mr. Sims had not the slightest appearance of belonging to the nautical profession, nor of having recently assisted in the capture of an enemy’s vessel,

and so come into the possession of prize-money; and yet what he had just done was suggestive of the old stories current at the Common Hard, Portsmouth, of the brave old days when Jack-tars kindled their pipes with bank-notes, or ate them, sandwich fashion, between slices of bread-and-butter. Was he about to fry a gold watch, toss all his loose silver out of window, or paper the ceiling with postage stamps, next? Not at all; he went on opening letters.

They were all addressed to Coger's Inn, but not by any means were all of them superscribed with Mr. Sims's name. Some were for "Professor Merryscope, Ph. Dr.;" others were for "Abernethy Halford Hunter, M.D.;" others for "Miss de Rosenburg;" others for "Nemo," "Aliquis," "Tamen;" others for nearly every letter in the Greek alphabet, and almost every combination of initials. Some contained, in addition to postage-stamps, and wrapped in more or less greasy scraps of paper, locks of hair,—brown, grey, black, auburn, chestnut, sandy, and fiery red, coarse and fine, curled and straight. Professor Merryscope, Ph. Dr., had to deal with these; and the senders of the stamps and the locks of hair all made urgent requests to be favoured with certain information, mainly relative to love, marriage, and the pursuit of riches, which, it appeared, only Professor Merryscope, when duly provided with postage-stamps, could give. There were people who wrote to Abernethy Halford Hunter, M.D., eagerly asking to be relieved, by return of post and on receipt of stamps, from "nervous fluttering," "unaccountable sensations," "general depression," "dreadful all-overishness," and kindred ailments for which remedies are not to be found in the ordinary pharma-

copœia. Scores of people corresponded with Miss de Rosenberg, enclosing scraps of their handwriting,—villanous scrawls in most cases,—and demanding revelations concerning their personal characters and future prospects in life. Some were anxious with regard to hair-dyes, cosmetiques, and “Ninon de l’Enclos’ Revivifier,” which was warranted (for eighteen postage-stamps) to make people of sixty look younger than youths of sixteen. Denizens of Dorsetshire were desirous to know how they might earn a genteel livelihood by ornamental leather-painting and decorating Japanese lacquer-ware. Correspondents from Sunderland presented their compliments to “Nemo,” and were perfectly certain that they were the parties rightly entitled to the 9,089*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* unclaimed dividends then lying in the name of Scrookidge in the Bank of England. A confiding party at Bolton-le-Sands was wistful to learn the nature of the desirable investment by which (only eight hundred pounds outlay) a permanent income of five hundred per annum could be secured. Applications for pecuniary loans, accompanied by offers of every kind of security, from landed estates and dock-warrants, to pianofortes and silver spoons, were numerous. But almost every body who wrote either to Professor Merryscope, Ph. Dr., to Miss de Rosenberg, to Abernethy Halford Hunter, M.D., to “Nemo,” or “Aliquis,” or “Tamen,” or “Beta,” or “Sigma,” to “A.B.C.” or “X.Y.Z.” sent postage-stamps or coin of the realm.

“If I could only make my mind up to take post-office orders,” thought Mr. Sims, “‘Nemo’ alone would be worth twenty pounds a week. But I won’t. That’s an impulse I *can* subdue. Many a man of

business has found his bill of indictment in a P.-O. order."

He arranged the letters in different piles methodically, tied up some, filed others. About a dozen or so he burnt. These did not enclose any stamps. The contents, indeed, were generally brief, and not complimentary. "Swindler," wrote one defaulter, "if I didn't live at Berwick-upon-Tweed, I'd hunt you out and kick you." "Villain," a second one had the ill manners to express himself, "your plausible humbug won't go down with me;" and "Scoundrel" was the coarse commencement of a third; the fourth beginning with the rude apostrophe, "Rascal." One enemy—even Mr. Sims had enemies—mingled a spice of humour with his malice. There was something round, flat, and hard in his letter, which any one might have reasonably conjectured to be either a sixpence or a half-sovereign. On examination it proved to be a farthing, and was encircled by this legend, "Ha, ha! you thought you'd caught me, did you?" Mr. Sims was not at all vexed, nay, seemed somewhat tickled. He burnt the letter, but pocketed the farthing with a smile.

"A droll dog, a very droll dog," he said, whistling between whiles. "After all, it's cash. A pin a day is a groat a year. A farthing put out at interest will make a man as rich as Croesus, if he can only live to the age of Methusaleh. What do I care for their loud words? Let 'em abuse as much as they like. Let 'em come here. If even they get into Coger's Castle, they won't get anything out of Buffalmaccò the Ruthless and Filoe and Co."

He walked to the window and tapped his nail against the dirty pane.

"If one cared to call a charwoman in, and have all this grime cleaned off," he chuckled, "and if there was anything down there besides cats and sparrows and chimneys, I might pass my leisure time in seeing the fools pass. How many hundreds a minute, I wonder?"

His principal work was over, and he had begun to dally with the rest. The letters, tied and taped and filed, he swept into a cupboard and locked up. A special pile which bore either his own name, Sims, Coger's Inn, or that of the mysterious firm of Filoe and Co., he reserved on his table. The silver was all in his pocket. The stamps he had entombed in a drawer. And whenever Mr. Sims opened any thing it was with a key, and he always locked everything after him. His very trousers and waistcoat pockets seemed ruled by Chubb and Bramah, so tightly did they close.

"I wonder," mused Sims, frugally lunching off the Abernethy biscuit of which he had spoken to Mrs. Armytage, and perhaps also in compliment to the illustrious surgeon whose name he had borrowed,— "I wonder who the 'married gentleman' is who advertises for unruly children to tame? I think I could tame 'em at a guinea a lesson. Dear me, even Mr. Van Amburg might have saved himself a good deal of trouble, if he'd brought a Bengal tiger or two to Coger's Inn. Unruly children! Why, Buff could tame a dozen of 'em before breakfast. Hark! he's at it again."

Long quiescence had proved unbearable to Buffal-

macco the Ruthless, and emboldened by the interval that had occurred since he was last summoned, he was stamping on the floor and thwacking the office desk with the broadsword more fiercely than ever.

"'Ear me,"—to this effect was Buffalmacco the Ruthless's voice heard through the door,—"'ear me, minions, were yon blue skyey a sea of bl-l-ludd, were hevry blade of grass a bleeding corse in my path, I would not falter; no! Saha! slaves of the vile Oppimo, come on!" And the slaves of Oppimo the Vile apparently coming on, in theory, Buffalmacco the Ruthless went at them in practice until the crazy room shook again.

Mr. Sims unlocked his door and called out, "Buff."

"Before you go quite mad, my young friend," he remarked firmly but mildly, "you will oblige me by putting that sword away, and doing something towards earning your wages. Fill up twenty-six characters by handwriting, a dozen Ninon de l'Enclos recipes, and fourteen genteel livelihoods directly; do you hear? You may do a few nervous affections, and futures foretold too, for stock. We're sure to want 'em."

Buffalmacco the Ruthless, who from the fiercest had suddenly become the meekest boy in all Coger's Inn, betook himself to a high stool at the office desk, from the recesses of which he produced sundry packets of note-paper, partially filled up with lithographed characters in imitation of manuscript, and in ink of various hues.

Mr. Sims went back to his room, and read his own letters, and, those destined for Filoe and Co. They were of a very different character to the previous instalment of his correspondence. There was no question now of paltry postage stamps, or shillings, or half-

sovereigns. Mr. Sims was up to his eyes in thousands. He read of mortgages, and post-obits, of deeds and bonds, of bills and promissory notes, of assignments and reversions.

"Lord Racketborough," he mused inwardly. "Is he good for twopence-halfpenny yet? Poor old Tennis-court is very nearly done up. The Southbank has got young Draff Huskisson of the Blues. Good-bye to the broad acres of Vealsborough. Can Mrs. Mountain Earsleigh have five thousand on her note of hand? No, she can't. Will I lend Sir Paul Pindar any more on the Wakefield estate? No, I won't. Will I give Mr. Fishton Shiftleigh time, because he's got neuralgia and has lately lost his aunt? No, I won't. What have I to do with his neuralgia? Hang his neuralgia! Why didn't his aunt leave him money enough to take up his bills with? Now then, Buff, what is it?"

Buff had knocked at the door. When his master opened it, he handed him a card. Mr. Sims looked at it, and said curtly, "Show him in." He flung his door wide open, sat down before his great leathern-covered table,—there was not a letter or a vestige of created paper on it now, all had been spirited away with pantomimic rapidity,—thrust his hands into his pockets, and looked prepared for anything.

He was quite prepared for his visitor, who turned out to be Sir Jasper Goldthorpe, neat and spotless as to outward appearance as ever, but very pale and careworn, and bowed; not at all the man he was at Christmas Eighteen hundred and forty-nine.

Mr. Sims scanned him narrowly under his lids. "He outran me bravely he thought, but I have caught him up. Aha! I have caught him up."

It might have been long illness and long mental suffering, but Sir Jasper, before whom all men were wont to tremble, seemed quite meek and humble—almost cowed, to tell the truth, before the mean little man with the grey head and the purple nose.

“Shall I close the door?” the baronet asked.

“No,” returned Mr. Sims shortly, and almost snappishly.

“I had better,” Sir Jasper softly urged.

“No,” repeated the other. “The boy is deaf and blind, save when I tell it.”

“DESBOROUGH!” cried Jasper, appealingly.

“Hay!” exclaimed Mr. Sims. “What’s that? You’ve made a mistake. Buff,” he continued, rising, and calling to the ruthless clerk, “the gentleman’s come to the wrong chambers. There’s no Mr. Desborough here. These are Filoe and Co.’s offices.”

But Buffalmacco the Ruthless continued filling up the lithographed papers, as though he had been in good sooth as deaf as his master had declared him to be.

“Show the gentleman out,” Mr. Sims went on.

But Buffalmacco the Ruthless being blind as well as deaf for the nonce, didn’t see the gentleman, and never turned his red head.

“Desborough, Mr. Desborough!” Sir Jasper broke in, catching the little man by his garment. “For Heaven’s sake hear me. I conjure you, I entreat you. Here, let me shut the door.”

Mr. Sims made a faint show of resistance, but eventually suffered the rich man to do as he asked. He who had always been accustomed to have doors—golden doors, too—opened and shut for him; he who

could raise the rate of discount by a nod, and make money tight in the City by crooking his little finger!

Mr. Sims sat down as before in his chair, his hands in his pockets and his lips close set.

"Once more, you will hear me, Des——," the baronet was beginning.

"Don't know the party," broke in Mr. Sims: "he's dead. Dead and gone years ago. There used to be a Mr. Sims here, but he's gone away. He went off to Australia by the Black Ball line of packets last January twelvemonth, and is supposed to have been lost in the bush, and eaten up by Bungaree, King of the Blacks."

"What am I to call you, then? But for mercy's sake, hear me."

"Say Filoe and Co., and I'll listen to you. I'm Filoe, and the boy in the next room's the Co."

"I should know the name well enough," Sir Jasper retorted, with a transient touch of his old haughtiness. "Much stamped paper bearing that endorsement has passed through my hands."

"Curiously," replied Mr. Sims *alias* Filoe, "I've a quantity of it myself accepted by one Captain William Goldthorpe, of whom you may know something, and which I'm going to endorse this afternoon to a friend of mine in the City."

The baronet bit his lips. "I'm no stranger to my son's embarrassments," he said. "Munificent as his allowance has always been, I know that he has exceeded it, and that he has plunged into a vortex of profligate expenditure."

"Do you know that he bets?" Mr. Sims asked calmly.

"I have heard so."

"Do you know that he gambles?"

"I fear that he has become addicted to the unhappy passion of play."

Mr. Sims might have winced a little, but he did not; he only sneered.

"Mere paralysis in the elbow," he said. "There used to be a Mr. Desborough who was afflicted with that complaint, and died. Do you know that the Captain's up to the eyes in all manner of wickedness that costs money, and that next Wednesday is the Derby Day, and that he has backed Orcus,—as if that three-legged brute could ever get round Tattenham corner,—and that he stands to lose twenty thousand?"

Sir Jasper slightly groaned, and hid his face in his handkerchief.

"You were always an old humbug," Mr. Sims remarked contemptuously: it was Belphegor bearding Mammon. "You knew very well that he was deep in Filoe and Co.'s books, only you weren't quite aware of the fact that I was Filoe. Why couldn't you look at the name over the door when you came hunting for dead men, you old stupid?"

It was a peculiarity of Mr. Sims, when he used harsh words, never to make them audible in a harsh voice. As he upbraided Mrs. Armytage, so he upbraided Sir Jasper Goldthorpe; and the tone of his last speech had been quite mellifluous.

"It was not on his account, I called upon you," Sir Jasper answered, with an unquiet look towards his tormentor.

"Of course it wasn't, it was on your own; but, if you've no objection, I will settle the captain's business

first. He owes me thirty-seven hundred pounds. Are you going to pay me, here and now, or am I to lock up Sir Jasper Goldthorpe's son in Cursitor Street?"

"I would do all I could to satisfy the claims against him, but I fear that he has other liabilities."

"Others! By that I suppose you mean that there are more Filoes and Co. than one. I dare say twenty thousand wouldn't cover the paper he has out, let alone the nice little nest-egg he's laid for the Derby. There's scarcely a bill-discounter in London who hasn't got his precious autograph. They think he's pretty safe, knowing what his father seems to be, but not knowing what he really is so well as I do. And yet *I* don't know anything, do I, Sir Jasper? But I'll tell you what: our people are getting shy even of the son of such a rich man as Sir Jasper Goldthorpe. He's but a younger son, you know, after all. One off the title; might have been two but for that accident."

Sir Jasper groaned again.

"Yes," the merciful Sims continued, "I dare say you do feel that. Terrible drop it was, to be sure. How are the mighty fallen! and the rest of it. Dreadful blow to Miss Hill too, whom our little lady yonder is so fond of. But, mark my words, Sir J., young Hopeful's creditors will sell him up, and that in two twos. Not but what they'll lend him plenty more money by and by; but they want to see what he's made of, and how far his governor will shell out. As to his betting-book, you'll have to pay that on the nail, if Orcus goes to the bad. That's a case of must. Captain Goldthorpe can't be a defaulter."

"Is there no compromising his imprudent wagers?"

"There's very little compromising down on the

south side of St. George's Hospital, Hyde Park Corner. Hungry and sharp's the word, and if there's any meat on him, they'll have it. You'll get much more quarter at the hands of our people. The Jews will take anything so long as it's double the amount originally advanced. It's only Christians that go in for two hundred and fifty per cent. But even they'll compromise, if you stick out and threaten sale of commission, Insolvent Court, cutting off with a shilling, and so on. Take Filoe and Co. for instance. I'm not unreasonable, any more than the Co., who has ten shillings a week, paid every Saturday at two p.m. We're open to an offer, we're to be squared. The captain owes us thirty-seven hundred pounds. Give us a cheque for three thousand, and we'll cry quits."

"And how much actual money has the wretched boy had at usurious interest?"

"If by usurious interest at sixty per cent., and the renewals and et ceteras, which, after you've paid the original debt, always leave you more in debt than you were before, you mean 'actual money,' I dare say the captain's had a cool fifteen hundred pounds, and that's liberal. All hard cash, mind. I never give wine or pictures, or any of that sort of trumpery."

"I will give you a cheque for two thousand five hundred pounds to-morrow."

"Won't do," Mr. Sims calmly returned. "When Filoe and Co. make an offer, F. and Company never depart from it. The Co. in the next room wouldn't abate a sixpence for half a week's salary. Say, when will you send us the cheque?"

"You shall have the money, if it be imperatively necessary. A letter enclosing it shall be left for any

messenger you choose to send after ten o'clock to-morrow morning. But there are other liabilities. Money is much in demand, and is very hard to get just now."

"That speech from Sir Jasper Goldthorpe," Mr. Sims exclaimed, in graceful raillery,—“those words from a gentleman who coins golds, who eats, drinks, and sleeps upon money-bags! Bah! you are jesting.”

"I am not indeed. The operations of our house are tremendous, but they are equalled by the calls made upon us."

"There, that will do. And how about the surplus? But we won't be hard upon you. Our cheque we must have, because we want it; but Filoe and Co. will undertake to satisfy all outstanding calls against young Hopeful, and get in all the stamped paper from all the tribes of Israel, lost ones and all, for ten shillings in the pound paid down."

"If I accede to this, will you do me one favour?"

"What is it?"

"Not to lend William any more money."

"Yes," replied Mr. Sims, very slowly and drily. "I think I can promise that the captain won't get another shilling from Filoe and Co. until we see our way a great deal more clearly. Do you know, Sir Jasper Goldthorpe, that I'm not quite so well satisfied with the security as I was an hour ago? I begin to be of your opinion, that money is much in demand and very hard to get; and that although the operations of your house are tremendous, they are equalled by the calls made upon it. Is there any tangible surplus, Sir J.?" The richest man in London moved uneasily in his chair, and a faint flush overspread his pallid cheek.

"You shall have your cheque," he said with an effort, "and I will give you authority to compound with my son's creditors."

"I ask you 'eye,' and you answer 'elbow,'" Mr. Sims continued. "But let that pass. We have settled the captain's little business, and relieved Filoe and Co. from the painful necessity of issuing twenty-eight Victorias by the grace of, at two pounds fourteen each, commanding William Goldthorpe to put in an appearance before Fred. Pollock at Westminster. Now about your own concerns. May I ask to what I am indebted for the pleasure of *et cetera*, *et cetera*, *et cetera*, and how the deuce you came to stumble across me and Coger's Inn?"

"She sent me here."

"Clever little minx, I dare say she did. And what was I to do?"

"In an interview I had with her only yesterday, I begged, I implored, I almost went on my knees to her to name a sum for which she would consent to resign those fatal papers."

"What fatal papers?"

"Oh, Desborough, Desborough, you know too well."

Upon my word, Sir Jasper Goldthorpe, I don't; and I can't see what any papers, fatal or otherwise, have to do with your visit to me."

"She said that she could do nothing without your sanction. She implied that you were a participator in the secret which is the curse and agony of my life. She resisted my entreaties, my supplications, my offers, always on the plea of being unable to act without you. And finally, saying that you might prove tractable,

she bade me come to you, and told me where to find you."

"I declare that were you to give me fifty thousand pounds, I couldn't help you," Sims replied, with a very disturbed and puzzled expression of countenance. "It seems to me that she has been making fools of both of us. She was always good at lying," muttered Mr. Filoe Sims to himself, "and this is decidedly an elephantine lie. I'm too fond of money," he continued to the baronet, "to refuse a good offer if I've anything to sell; but I don't happen to be in partnership with Mrs. A. in this particular instance."

He was speaking with perfect frankness. Mr. Sims never told untruths when mendacity was unnecessary. Mrs. Armytage lied from predilection. There are some people who will lie about the day of the week and the time of the day. Sims had taken a comprehensive view of the situation. He saw there was nothing to be gained by deceiving Sir Jasper Goldthorpe on this point, and was for that reason quite candid and truthful.

"Then, you know nothing?" the baronet asked, but not in a relieved tone, as though he would rather have been in the power of Mr. Sims, than in that of Mrs. Armytage.

"Nothing beyond a general impression that our lively little friend has a hold over you, by which she manages to extract about two thousand a year from Beryl Court. Do you receive her rents for her, or are you the agent for her late husband's pension?"

Sir Jasper moved towards the door.

"I must try again," he murmured. "The con-

tinuance of this thralldom will either kill or drive me mad."

"Nay," said Mr. Sims, "though I know nothing at present, there is no reason why I shouldn't screw all that is to be known out of our captivating acquaintance. If she has a hold over you, I have a hold over her."

"And I one, and no light hold, over you, Desborough," Sir Jasper interposed in a low, sad voice.

"And so we all hold, and may all hang together," gaily responded Mr. Sims, with a short dry laugh, and positively snapping his fingers. "A hold over me, bah! I defy you. Not all the oaths of all the witnesses, true and perjured in the world, could make me out to be Hugh Desborough. To those I choose I am Sims, to others Filoe. I may call myself Sardanapalus, or Tippoo Saib, if I like; but Hugh Desborough I never can and never will be. He is a dead man, dead and buried, and I have come into his property."

Sir Jasper Goldthorpe looked at this mean, grey, ill-favoured little man, with his rogue's face and shabby raiment, and his thoughts rolled back long years. He was among the twenties, and saw himself humble and struggling behind a country-shop counter, his wife in the back parlour nursing a baby boy. He saw the man, who, in despite of truth and knowledge, he was to call Filoe, not Desborough, young, natty, spruce, rosy—a jaunty little man in a white hat, blue coat, yellow waistcoat, stocking-net pantaloons, and Hessian boots—a merry little man, fond of his bottle of port, his rubber of whist, and his Anacreontic song, which he piped in a chirping voice when business-hours were over. Yes, there was the shop, his little boy playing

with the brooms, and brushes, and fagots of wood at the door; his wife in the back parlour nursing a baby. He saw, in the lazy summer afternoon, the jaunty little man coming across the high street. His blue shadow fell across the threshold. Anon he was in the shop, and spoke him cheerfully but decisively. For the little man was his superior, and had authority over him. There was a talk about a lottery-ticket. Six of "thirty thousand pounds," "the last lottery ever to be drawn." "Bish, contractor," jangled in his ears like chimes. And the little man changed; ah, how he changed! and he saw himself change no less. He was on a jury. The little man in soiled and sordid raiment, stood in a wooden pen in a hot crowded room; an inverted mirror over his head, a man with keys behind, rue on the ledge before him. Guilty, Death. It was a banker's prosecution — a private banker's, a Quaker firm, luckily. The quiet Friends were always averse to capital punishment. "Guilty, Death;" and he saw a ship slowly working out of dock, the men at the capstan crooning forth their dull song, the soldier with his bright bayonet standing over the hatchway where the exiles lay fettered. Hugh Desborough was dead indeed. His name was written in the midst of the great Pacific wave, and a great golden rock rolled across Sir Jasper Goldthorpe's field of vision, and left him face to face with Filoe and Co. composedly grinning.

"There is nothing more," Sir Jasper said, with a deep, deep sigh.

"But one word." Mr. Sims placed himself in front of Mammon. He had the audacity to take him by the lapels of that revered frock-coat, to look him full in the

eyes, to draw him towards as much light as would pass through the murky window-pane.

"See here," said Mr. Sims, very softly, almost kindly. "We are very old acquaintances, and have each seen our ups and downs, though business makes a gulf between us as wide as Chelsea Reach. Is all right with you? Is Beryl Court really built of gold, or is it only straw and stamped paper? Be frank. You are the most specious, but yet the duller rascal of the two. You may deceive yourself. I never do, save when I back the red or take the box in my hand. Are you going to the bad?"

"The reputation of my house,"—Sir Jasper began in his grave plodding voice.

"May become so much infamy to-morrow. If you were to lay me down fifty thousand pounds in gold on that table, you might be still on the very eve of a Smash. I can understand when a man's head gets muddled with millions. If you are ruined, of course the ruin will be of the most splendid description. Come, speak out."

The baronet looked round for his hat, and muttered something about a cheque awaiting the pleasure of Filoe and Co.

"I suppose I must let you go your own gate," observed Mr. Sims, releasing his hold on Sir Jasper's lapels, and thrusting his hand into his pocket again. "We have touched for a moment, and must now fly asunder farther than ever. Don't come here any more. I won't do you any good. It may be part of my subsequent duty to assist in smashing you. Keep your promise to Filoe and Co., and they'll let you be; if not, they will be compelled to do you a mischief."

"You will remember old times, Des—Filoe."

"I shall remember nothing," Mr. Sims tartly replied, "but business. Let us trust that our mutual business transactions won't bring us into collision. I say again that Desborough is dead, and that the ghosts of Townsend or Ruthven, the Bow Street runners, couldn't identify him. Go, and return no more. If you had spoken to me frankly, I might have forgotten the wrong you once did me, and helped you. I have no means of judging, but I can swear you need help."

"I do indeed, in one instance—that of the woman who tortures me."

"What, of little Florence, little Flo?" She is useful to me; but you have still my full leave to poison her, or have her kidnapped and locked up in a coal cellar for life. I shall be obliged to do something of the same sort myself; for, do you know, my good sir, her Impulse makes her dangerous."

He had his hand on her door, and was about to open it.

"Remember," he said, "you are doing wrong. This is the last time of asking. As you knew me once, I am now—a common swindler and cheat. But I have means, aha! I have means. The mouse might help the lion. Coger's Inn might come to the aid of Beryl Court benefit to both parties. Once more, have you anything to say?"

"Nothing, nothing," Sir Jasper falteringly made answer; and he was given over to Buffalmacco the Ruthless, and conducted out of Coger's Castle.

"Go," said Mr. Sims, apostrophising a cupboard in default of his late visitor. "Go to your clerks, your slaves, and your toadies; go, till the smash comes.

What a smash it will be! I might have disentangled the web. I should like to be the bosom friend at Beryl Court. But it's too late, evidently; and he's far too deeply dipped. This makes the second of my acquaintances who have Smash written in their way-bills. The little woman must go. There is no help for it. Her Impulse grows stronger and stronger."

He became aware of the presence of a fragment of biscuit on the window-sill, and, pouncing upon it, devoured it with great gusto.

"She's an artful little hussy, too," he thought, still munching. "She's moved that heavy, senseless, spooney lubber away from Hoogendracht. Yes; the Lay Brother went away on the 10th of May. Next Wednesday is the 24th. She thought to spirit him away from her Sims; and here's a letter telling me that he's safe and sound at Belleriport. A *garde-chiourme*, aha! a *garde-chiourme*. She doesn't give parties in the Rue Neuve for nothing. Her influence with the maritime Prefect must be enormous. The *chiourme* too. How fond she is of the old locality! Memory will bring back the feeling. *Mon enfant, tu finiras là, où tu as commencé.*"

May I be permitted to observe, that people who have passed many years of their lives in a foreign country, thoroughly isolated from the companionship of their own countrymen, frequently express their thoughts in the language which they have been accustomed to hear spoken.

"Buff," said Mr. Sims, passing into the adjoining room, "here are five sovereigns to pay for the usual postages and advertisements. Twelve more insertions, on alternate days, for professor Merryscope, if you

please. I shall not be here to-morrow. And now," continued Mr. Sims, "I'll go and enjoy myself."

Mr. Sims's curriculum of enjoyment was peculiar. He took a walk up Regent Street, and passed into Piccadilly by the Burlington Arcade, peering into a variety of shops for the display of fashionable wares, and chuckling to think how many bills of sale he held over those gay stocks-in-trade, and how many of the dashing proprietors, male and female, he had under the thumbscrew. Then he took a little walk in Hyde Park, and looked at the distinguished personages on foot, on horseback, and in heraldry-covered carriages, who owed Filoe and Co. money. Then he had a nice little dinner at a sixpenny eating-house; and then, after a quiet tumbler at a tavern, of which the landlord was obsequiously polite to the customer who held his lease, his life-policy, and his dock-warrants, Mr. Sims thought that he would go to the play. He had paid his gold into a bank, and had a pocketful of silver. He came back from the play about three o'clock in the morning, very haggard, with bloodshot eyes, and with very nearly three hundred pounds in gold and notes about him.

"What's the good?" he muttered, turning into a wretched bed at a coffee-shop in Long Acre—he seldom slept twice in the same place. "I lost a thousand the night before last."

CHAPTER XIV.

Mrs. Armytage's Impulse.

DEAR ladies, who are good enough to read this story, don't you think that there is a great deal too much about money and not half enough about love in its pages? There has not been, positively, a scene of downright honest sweethearting in one single chapter. Is it possible for that wicked and most objectionable little person, Mrs. Armytage, to love any one? Besides, who is the *prétendu*, who the *soupirant*? What man has been fortunate or unhappy enough to find a place in that cankered heart, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked? There is Miss Magdalen Hill, too. She is rich, she is accomplished, she is pious; and she loses one lover by a railway-accident, and has another, a clergyman, too, almost turned out of doors. And that rude hoyden, Miss Letitia Salusbury, is *she* susceptible of the soft passion? When is the real love-making going to begin? you may ask, ladies. Why, even a little servants'-hall *tendresse*, between Sis Jasper Goldthorpe's fifth footman and the scullery-maid in Onyx Square, might alleviate the intolerable dreariness of this history of money-bags, bills for discount, postage-stamps, cheques, bank-notes, and naughty people who live in ugly places and lend money at sixty per cent. Ladies, you must be just. If you want love-making novels, Mr. Mudie will pile up your carriage-cushions with any amount of three-volume sentimentality. If you require theological novels about High Church, Low Church, Broad Church, or no Church at all, the circulating libraries and the railway book-

stalls will meet your every wish. How am I to write about Love, of which I know nothing, and never did know aught that would bear the dwelling upon? You seek the placid lake, the green boughs, the birds singing in the calm sky of affection. I have been far out to sea, and can only discourse of howling waves and inky clouds, of jagged rocks and drifting spars of wreck, of storm-birds hovering over the foam, and bunches of tangled seaweed floating Heaven knows whither. This story is not about the Seven Sons of Venus, could Cupid so multiply himself. It is called the Seven Sons of Mammon. It treats of the low and squalid, the sordid and the base, of dross-getting and dross-spending; it tells of the good and evil that by money may be wrought. I asked in the outset if gold were a chimera, and denied the postulate. For gold gives us power and scorn, and the accomplishment of desire, and the working-out of long-nursed hatreds and revenges; and by gold in Mammon and Mammon in gold this book must stand or fall.

And you, good gentlemen, have you not a crow to pluck with me, for that I have but as yet introduced you to three of Mammon's seven sons? One of them dead and buried, too, at Kensal Green. Have patience: let the months and years roll on. There is time enough for the sailor to come home from sea, for the Eton boy to grow up to man's estate, for his two brothers to make themselves a place in history. All this may take place in the twelfth volume or thereabouts of this work. There is time enough for the very dead to—but enough: I must attend to the affairs of the living.

Mrs. Armytage, for instance, was as lively as the liveliest of kittens, when, the cheque of Filoe and Co.

in her porte-monnaie, she trotted down the crazy stairs of Coger's Inn. She was an ephemeral creature. She hoped and feared, sorrowed and joyed, but for the moment. She was an April in flounces and crinoline, and the sunshine far predominated over the showers. When a storm did come, it was short, but sharp.

In the shameful old courtyard of Coger's Inn her brougham was waiting. Have you observed how partial the little woman was to riding about? She seldom walked. People whose life is one criminal hurry are obliged to ride. Somebody else was in waiting, too, being no other than Mr. Tigg's man, who—being well aware of the ins and outs of Coger's Inn, and so well persuaded that, unless Mrs. Armytage threw herself out of a window, or took up her permanent abode in one of the sets of chambers, she must necessarily come out by the same door by which she had entered—was basking in the sun, which made him look very dusty, and lit up his greasy hat and coat-collar with golden flakes. He had been amusing himself by chewing the end of a lucifer-match with great apparent relish. Mr. Tigg's man was youthful, and a highly disagreeable young man he was, both to sight and to smell, to say nothing of hearing. Why his hat was much too large for him, and was worn at the back of his head; why his coat was too long, and his trousers too short, and his boots too big; why he should dangle one hideous Berlin glove, which, in antediluvian times, may have been white, and which had not the remotest reference to a fellow; why he should have strings and pins where buttons should have been; why no vestige of under-linen should have been perceptible about him, save and except only one striped sock, which flapped idly

over one unlaced high-low; why his blue cotton pocket-handkerchief should have been deposited in his hat, allowing one small triangle of clouded cerulean to brand his pasty brow; why the mud, seemingly of last summer, should have encrusted his lower extremities; why the grease of the year before last slashed his jerkin and pinked his sleeves, and the patches of perhaps the last century spotted him over, as though he had made his coat from a particoloured counterpane, or had been a harlequin, fallen upon evil days, and into a gutter;—all these were matters between the young man, his tailor, and his conscience. His chewing the ends of lucifer-matches might likewise be looked upon as an idiosyncrasy. The continual blinking of his lashless eyelids, and the occasional spasmodic twitch of his limbs, which gave him the appearance of a clumsy pupil in St. Vitus's school, who had failed even to master his Dance to perfection, might be put down to the score of natural infirmities. Nor could he help his large ears, his wide and idiotically simpering mouth, his beardless chin and cheeks, his scant hair, which had been apparently half-singed off, while the other moiety had been cut with a knife and fork, and his many pimples. But he was a slovenly young man, for soap and water are cheap: there was even a pump in Coger's Inn, and washing would have done him no harm, and made his purse none the leaner. And he was an inconsistent young man; for while in the aggregate he looked like a beggar, he quite dissipated any notion of pauperism that may have been formed respecting him, first by wearing in his foul old stock a diamond brooch of great brilliance, and next by allowing a golden chain of massive form and curious

workmanship to meander over the breast of his exceedingly ragged waistcoat. This young man might have been about twenty-three years of age. There hung about him a mingled and decidedly unpleasant odour, in which a chandler's shop, a tobacconist's, and a tap-room contended for preëminence; and he had a voice which reminded you at once of a person naturally gruff, and with a cold in his head besides, whispering down a gutta-percha tube. The young man's name was Reuben.

"A pretty cavalier, upon my word, to ride with," quoth Mrs. Armytage, shaking her sunny ringlets. "And that diamond must be worth a hundred and fifty pounds, if its worth a penny. If you please, sir," she continued,—as a pleasant compromise between "wretch" and "fellow,"—"everything is settled, and we will go back to Mr. Tigg's, if you please."

"Ham Hi," asked the young man, "to go hinside, or ham Hi to go hout? Thof a follerer, Hi ham a gent, and 'av moved among the very fust."

The fact is, that the young man had ridden all the way from Stockwell on the box of the brougham, and the driver had in no qualified terms imparted to him his opinion that pumping on first, and rubbing down with a bath-brick afterwards, were about the best remedies for his complaint.

"Hi ham respected," continued the young man, evidently much hurt in his feelings, "hin the 'all an' hin the robin' room. Hi ham well known at jidge's chambers. Ham Hi to go hinside, or ham Hi to go hout?"

If the young man's face had not been of the precise hue of cold boiled veal, it might have been likened to

an aitchbone of beef, so full of h's in the wrong place was he.

Mrs. Armytage was in an excellent temper. "You had better get inside, I think," she said. "I'm sure I didn't mean to offend you. Will you drive back to the same place, if you please?" she added to the coachman.

"I'm glad it's inside this time," grumbled the charioteer; "I'll be danged if I drive over Westminster Bridge again with that scarecrow by the side of me." The brougham was only a hired one; and the man thought, it may be presumed, that he had a right to be impertinent.

"If you would be kind enough, sir," suggested Mrs. Armytage, "to sit as far away on that side"—indicating the one opposite to her—"as you can; and if you'd just pull the window down: and,—yes, thank you, if you wouldn't mind my—it's so very refreshing this warm weather."

On hearing the two magic syllables "refresh," the dull eye of the young man brightened up, and he grinned fawningly. But on the word terminating with "ing" instead of "ment," the eye subsided into fishy gloom, and the young man's mouth relapsed into its normal expression of hopeless vacancy; while Mrs. Armytage proceeded to sprinkle herself with eau de Cologne.

"May I ask," the conversational little lady proceeded, with unabated politeness, "how you employ yourself generally?"

"Hi follers 'em habout," was the reply of the young man.

"Whom did you say you were good enough to follow?"

"Father's customers. Them has es' down hupon, sich as you; and Hi follers them as 'as to be took."

"Took?"

"Capture. Middlesex and Surrey to wit. Capias," explained the young man, with as many nods as words. "Hi follers; and hif they means boltin', Hi 'angs hon. Hi oughter for to take myself. Hi oughter, but Hi aint lucky. Father says Hi'm a fool."

"I wish your papa would get a new tailor for you, and wouldn't let you smoke such strong tobacco," thought Mrs. Armytage.

"Hi oughter," continued the young man, a deep sense of injury in his tone, "to be 'igh hup in the lor. Hif not a hofficer, han attorney. My brother's one, and lives hin Gray's Hinn. 'E's a swell, and Hi'm holder than 'im, but Hi'm honly Mr. Tigg's little boy."

"Dear me," murmured Mrs. Armytage sympathisingly, and gazing at the victim of parental partiality through her eye-glass.

"Hit's cos Hi haint a scoller," proceeded the aggrieved young man. "Hi wenter school, and Hi couldn't fix the words. The master 'ammered me and Hi 'owled. The more Hi 'owled, the more 'e 'ammered me. Hit was 'ammerin and 'owlin, 'owlin and 'ammerin all day long; but Hi never could fix them words; and Hi'm honly good forter serve writs, and swear affdavitches, and foller parties habout."

He sank into moody silence after this affecting narrative, and chewed the cud of sweet and bitter fancies—and another lucifer-match—during the remainder of the journey.

Mrs. Armytage thought of a thousand things;—of some that made her eyes glisten, of others that darkened her fair face, and stamped a tiny little horseshoe—but only for a moment—between her brows. And ever and anon she opened her portemonnaie, and glanced triumphantly at a little bit of grey paper that lay neatly folded in a compartment by itself; and if, graceless little body, she could invoke a blessing upon anything, she must have blessed her lucky stars at the sight of that same grey paper.

The residence of Mr. Ephraim Tigg was in Badger Lane, a portion of the charming suburb of Stockwell which has not yet become susceptible to the influence of metropolitan improvements. On a mouldy zinc plate, from whose sunken letters the black annealing had cracked away, Mr. Tigg called himself an auctioneer, estate-agent, appraiser, and upholder. Those who were familiar with the business he carried on might have opined that casting down was much more his province than holding up; but, at any rate, it would have been more consistent with the announcement on his door-plate if Mr. Tigg had occupied himself a little with upholding his own residence, which had the craziest and most dilapidated appearance. The nucleus of this tenement had, to all seeming, been originally a showman's van; the wheels being removed to insure a firm foundation. This *corps de logis* had two wings, one in the guise of a washhouse, and the other in that of a parochial cage in a country town. Behind, something like a ruined brick-kiln struggled for architectural ascendancy with a barn. Before the place stretched by way of lawn a model, on a diminutive scale, of the great Desert of Sahara, with one oasis in the shape of

a boot, much worn, which had perhaps slipped from some angry wayfarer, who had shaken the dust off his feet on leaving Mr. Tigg's premises. The whole was fenced about with rusty spear-headed rails, pointing in various directions, as though the sheriff of Surrey had buried a posse of javelin-men beneath, and their imprisoned ghosts were piercing the earth with lethal weapons. There were plenty of flower-pots about, likewise saucers, generally broken; and a plentiful supply of mould, but not any flowers. The place was called Paradise Cottage. This name was displayed on a black board gibbeted between two poles, looking very much like one that had served for conveyance of announcements that rubbish might here be shot. The satirical artists among the neighbouring youth had also made it a medium for the display of cartoons in chalk, representing a personage of monstrous mien, presumed the proprietor of Paradise Cottage, suspended from a gallows, and smoking a pipe meanwhile. He was likewise shown as selling himself for a bag labelled "2s. 6d." to a dreadful creature with horns, hoofs, and a tail, and who might reasonably be supposed to be the Enemy of Mankind. These drawings were accompanied by insulting legends, generally assuming an interrogative form, and inquiring whether Mr. Tigg was the person who skinned the flea for the hide and fat, and who made beef-tea out of paving-stones.

Badger Lane did not seem precisely the locality for carriages; but as Mrs. Armytage's brougham drove towards Paradise Cottage, the way was found to be stopped by a very splendid mail-phaeton, with two very splendid and champing grey horses, splendidly harnessed. The fittings of the vehicle—silver-mounted lamps, tiger-skin

rugs, morocco cushions—were on an equal scale of splendour; and behind was a solemn groom in a blue-and-silver livery, who sat with his arms folded, mute and contemplative, as though he were twin brother to the Emperor Napoleon, brought by the exigences of fortune down to the service of a livery-stable, instead of St. Helena.

The proprietor of all this splendour was absolutely sumptuous. He stood in the midst of the Desert of Sahara talking to Mr. Tigg. He was a fat gentleman; and with his vast abdomen and pursy cheeks, but sallow complexion, and black beard and ringlets, quite fulfilled the idea of an Oriental Alderman. He glittered very much with chains, rings, and brooches, and he had a very large cigar, at which he drew with such vigour and persistence, that you might have thought it was his slave, and that he was determined to have a good day's work out of it. And the fat gentleman had very yellow gloves, and smelt very strongly of musk.

"You won't, then, you won't come to terms," the fat gentleman said, loud enough for Mrs. Armytage to hear, as, finding the narrow lane blocked, she cheerfully descended from her brougham; "you won't take nineteen and sevenpence in the pound! You're wrong, Mr. Tigg; upon my life and word and honour, now, you're wrong indeed."

"I wouldn't take nineteen and ninepence—I wouldn't take nineteen and elevenpence threepence—there!" Mr. Tigg made answer.

"Then you're wrong," pursued the fat gentleman; "you're wrong, my dear friend; bless you, and good-bye. Bless you—." He was forced to make his sen-

tences short, the cigar entailing much expenditure of respiration. "When will you come and dine?"

"I never come and dine," replied Mr. Tigg.

"Come and dine in the Regency Park. Why don't you live in the Regency Park, instead of in this mouse-trap?"

"We have all our different ways of enjoying life," Mr. Tigg observed sententiously.

"Truly so, truly so, my dear friend," went on the fat gentleman, still puffing. "I like to enjoy myself. You like to live in a dog-kennel. Good-bye, and bless you. Stop," he said, as though a novel idea had struck him, "perhaps you prefer to lock up in Surrey?"

"May be."

"Ah, there's something in that—something in that. By the way, will you go halves in another five hundred at three months for young Goldthorpe?"

"Hush!" cried Mr. Tigg; "don't mention names out of doors. Don't you see there's somebody coming?"

He pointed to Mrs. Armytage and the young man Reuben, who were just then at the hingeless gate which gave entrance to the Great Desert of Sahara.

The fat and splendid gentleman glanced over his shoulder, and took instantaneous stock of the new arrival. Badger Lane was scarcely an appropriate place wherein to discuss the merits of the lyric drama, but he immediately began to talk about the Italian Opera. He mentioned Persiani at once, and took leave of Mr. Tigg with a reference to the *Sonnambula*. He could not shake hands with Mr. Tigg, however; for the sufficient reason that his host leaned habitually on two crutch-sticks; but he blessed him a great many times, and, removing the cigar from his lips to hum an air

from *Norma*, mounted into his chariot of state. The brougham had backed out of Badger Lane, and the fat gentleman in his mail phaeton had it all his own way.

"Where have I met that woman before?" he said reflectively, as she drove into the high-road. "One doesn't see that grin and those curls twice in a life."

Mr. Tigg was delighted to see Mrs. Armytage, and in his joy positively gave his boy Reuben a shilling. It is remarkable that a very few minutes afterwards the pungent odour of the very strongest tobacco pervaded the dwelling of Mr. Tigg. Nature is, after all, but an aggregate of systems of compensation; and while Ephraim Tigg hardened his heart with usury, his son Reuben softened his brain with coarse tobacco and a short pipe.

The fumes of this calumet made Mrs. Armytage cough a little even in the kitchen, where she sat with Mr. Tigg. For it was on the basement floor, and in the apartment ordinarily devoted to culinary purposes, that the Stockwell Rasper elected to dwell. A lean and hungry cat with admirably defined ribs kept him company, while the young man Reuben smoked his pipe above stairs, until required to follow people about. The furniture of Mr. Tigg's kitchen was eccentric. There were plenty of dish-covers, but no dishes, and not a scrap of anything eatable to put in them, if dishes there had been. The place of a larder was supplied by a very large iron safe, and that of a dresser by a nest of drawers and pigeon-holes. The huge hobs of the kitchen-range were covered with a neat assortment of ink-bottles past service, and the open oven and plate-warmer appeared to contain newspapers. A common kitchen-table was littered with

files of documents. A hanging shelf contained Mr. Tigg's library: to wit, a Post-Office Directory, a Peerage and Baronetage, an Army List, a Navy List, a Clergy List, a Law List, and a Racing Calendar,—all books essential to the due carrying on of Mr. Tigg's vocation. Remote as was his residence from the abodes of wealth and the haunts of fashion, peers, baronets, members of the House of Commons, officers of the household cavalry and of her Majesty's navy, sages of the law, and dignitaries of the Church, had travelled to Stockwell, and sat in that squalid kitchen, and sometimes trembled before its master, as they vainly pleaded for "time." For when the mountain lends money, and Mahomet wants money, he must needs go to the mountain.

Regarding Mr. Ephraim Tigg himself, it may be a tenable theory to assume that this eminent Rasper chose to live in a kitchen, either through a fellow feeling for the rats which infested it, or else in salutary memory that it was somewhat nearer to that grave to which he seemed destined at no distant date to descend.

Whether he had attained the age of one hundred years, or was a few years short of the century, must remain a moot-point. On the principle of extremes meeting, he was a very Hercules of infirmities. His head was quite bald; and, more for use than ornament, there was perched on the crown thereof a black skull-cap of threadbare cotton velvet. The wags of his craft declared that he had lost all his teeth in gnawing up a certain great bankrupt's estate in the year 1825. He was slightly paralytic on one side of his face, and in one arm, and so lurched at you when he lent you

money, or sued you for the triple of that which he had lent. His legs and feet were thickly bandaged up; so were his hands, much afflicted with chalkstones. He walked, or hobbled, or limped, or lurched, as has been before mentioned, by the aid of two crutch-sticks. He wore a filthy, old, grey flannel dressing-gown, closely buttoned up. A yellow string that hung down from his throat, and belonging probably to his night-shirt, and a pair of misshapen slippers that had once been of red leather, marked what remaining sacrifices he had made to the Graces.

Mrs. Armytage knew his person and peculiarities by heart, and his appearance was scarcely repulsive to her. Indeed, she once said that he had a *belle tête de mort*. She chose the least rickety of the two wretched chairs the kitchen contained, opened her portemonnaie, took out the slip of grey paper, unfolded it, and displayed the cheque bearing the signature of Filoe and Co. to the eyes of the Rasper.

He received it very philosophically, seeming neither pleased nor displeased, but carefully scanning the signature and the private mark, and mumbling to himself meanwhile.

"It's righteous, mum," he said, "its righteous. A many and a many of Filoe's cheques I've seen. Deara, dear me, the little tricks he used to be up to. It was his custom, mum, always to stop the payment of the cheques he drew. You went to the bank and couldn't get 'em cashed, or paid 'em in and they was refused. Then you went back to him in a rage, and he said he was very sorry, and gave you another cheque, which was to be as right as ninepence,—he'd made a little error in his balance, he said then; and

deara, deara me, you used to get the money, and Filoe and Co. used to get sometimes twenty-four hours', and sometimes forty-eight hours' more profit on their little balances. Ah! but he wouldn't serve poor old Ephy such a trick."

Mrs. Armytage listened with amused composure to this anecdote of Messrs. Filoe's ingenuity.

"You wouldn't take my check," she remarked, "although you seem glad enough to accept one from a person who, it appears, was in the habit of cheating those with whom he dealt. You are a strange old man. Will you be good enough to give me back that—that paper, now you have the money?"

"In a moment, in a moment, mum," answered the Rasper. "It's up-stairs—I'll fetch it directly; but I'm very lame to-day, and very short of breath. Won't you have a glass of sherry wine and a sweet cake now you are here, mum?"

Once, in the earlier days of her acquaintance with the Rasper, and feeling exceedingly faint Mrs. Armytage had been tempted to accept such an invitation. Preserving, however, a lively remembrance of the dreadful dregs, and of the apparently calcareous fragments powdered with grit, of which she had partaken on that occasion, she declined the hospitable offer with an outward smile and an inward shudder.

"And how did you get along with my little boy?" the Rasper asked, tottering backwards and forwards, either in quest of something, or being anxious to obtain delay. "How did young Reuben behave, mum?"

"Ugh!" exclaimed the little woman, with profound disgust; "the wretch!"

"I know he isn't popular," his papa, with a leer,

went on. "Reuben's eccentric—he's peculiar. He's a character, mum."

"So it seems," remarked Mrs. Armytage drily.

"I grant he's a fool at his book learning," resumed the fond parent. "I never could get him to be articted, nor nothing of that sort; but he's as sharp, mum—he's as sharp as a *ne exeat*. He's made his little pickings, too, poor fellow, out of his pocketmoney, and what he's got from the gentlefolks he's followed."

"He won't get any pickings out of *me*," was the mental resolve of Mrs. Armytage.

"You'd scarcely believe it, mum, the Rasper went on, dilating with the congenial theme, that my boy, young as he is, has got houses—houses of his own, mum—in the thickest part of the Old Kent Road."

"Woe betide his tenants!" was the observation of the little lady.

"Ah, woe betide 'em, indeed, if they don't pay. Sharp's the word with my Reuben; and Monday's his selling-up day regular. That boy will put the brokers in to the most obstroperous tenant as clean as a whistle, as quick as lightning, and as welcome as the flowers in May."

Mrs. Armytage bowed her head in mute acknowledgment of the talents of the younger Rasper, and the force and justice of his father's similes.

"The way he took an Arabian bedstead worth at least two-ten, and with a real feather-bed, from under a case of Fever, and had it smoked in the back yard with sulphur and mahogany-shavings, that it might go quite sound and healthy to the sheriff's sale, was grand—grand and noble, mum. Think of the courage

of the thing. It reminded a friend of mine of the conduct of Boneypartey at the bridge of Waterloo."

The bridge of Arcola or Lodi might possibly have been mentioned by the Rasper's friend in connection with the career of the late Emperor of the French, but it did not matter:—decidedly not to Mrs. Armytage, who, yawning and drumming her pretty little fingers on the table again requested Mr. Tigg to let her have what she wanted, and allow her to depart.

"Directly, directly," he answered. "Bless us, what a hurry we're in! Sometimes we can stop by the hour together with old Ephy. You won't have no sherry wine; you won't have no cake? Don't you want a little accomodation; a tiny little bit of something at three months at, oh! so moderate a price. I'll renew, mum, I'll always renew for you. Don't you want some pretty article of jewellery to set off that charming little figure with? Say the word. Old Ephy's always ready to do business with you, and bears no malice for any mistakes made."

She laughed scornfully,—was it at the compliment or at the offer?—but she bit her lips and turned her head away. She had just then plenty of money at the banker's.

"Not to-day," she said; "don't tempt me, you wicked old man. Go and fetch me the paper, and let me go."

"A little bracelet now, just a fifty-pun' note to buy sweet scents with," the Rasper persuasively continued, and leering at her like a worn-out satyr in whom avarice had extinguished desire. "Say the word, pretty Mrs. Armytage. Say the word. Look here, and here, mum."

He had been pottering about since the conversation commenced, and, piece by piece, had brought out from his iron safe a quantity of flat, oval, morocco cases. He opened them with seeming carelessness, keeping her in conversation meanwhile. She cast her eyes—she could not help it—on the glittering gems as they lay in their nests of white satin. There were massive bracelets and tiny trinkets of gold filagree; there were big drop-ear-rings of pearl; there were necklaces of emerald and sapphire; there were *rivières* of diamonds, serpents of diamonds, lockets studded with diamonds, Lilliputian watches bristling with brilliants; there were pencil-cases with amethyst tops, and even snuff-boxes and *bonbonnières* of gold and mosaic and enamel; there were brooches and chatelaines of dull, heavy looking, red gold, all chased and bossed and graven; and there were legions of rings of every shape, of every size, that gleamed and glistened with a fascinating shimmer from among the dingy old papers on the kitchen-table, like the eyes of so many wild beasts crouching in their lair and waiting for their prey.

“Look at them,” cried Ephraim Tigg, his own old eyes sparkling as he greedily contemplated all this treasure; “look at the pooty things! Ain’t they better than all the meat and drink and fine clothes in the world? *They* don’t wear out, bless them. Think of the pretty things they’ll purchase. These real pearls will buy coronets with sham ones round them. These diamonds will bring the brightest eyes in England down to the poor old beggarman’s kitchen. They’ll buy houses and lands, and honours and friends. When I die,” quoth Ephraim Tigg, “I should like to be buried in di’monds.”

Mrs. Armytage gazed but for a minute or so. She resolutely closed her eyes and clenched her hands, and once more entreated Mr. Tigg to do her bidding. With many leers and whinings, and much expatiating on the beauty and costliness of his wares—in truth, they were superb—the Rasper at length consented to totter out of the room. With her eyes still closed, the woman heard him clumping up-stairs with his crutch-sticks; then, a lambent flame in her face, and, presaging evil, she started up.

She, and the jewels, and her Impulse were together. She hung over the table; she touched and fondled the gems; she tried now one bracelet and now another on her arm. Her fingers fluttered among the rings, and had a pretty palsy. She cursed because there was no looking-glass. She clutched at necklaces. She wounded her hands with the pins of brooches. Oh, but to have one of them! “Take one, Mrs. Armytage,” cried twenty thousand little fiends nestling in her golden curls. She felt sick and dizzy. Her breath came short and hot. Her heart leapt up to the bars of its cage, and her busy fingers still went wandering, and wandering, and wandering among the perilous stuff.

“What can a poor little woman do with a parasol? she muttered bitterly. “I can’t strangle him with a cambric pocket-handkerchief. Upon my word, if I were a man, I’d brain him with one of his own crutches, and force my way out of the house with all these things.”

Just at this moment her Impulse whispered, “Look there—look at that book, Mrs. Armytage; that’s safe enough.” In her agitation, rearranging a necklace in

its case, she had disturbed and well-nigh thrown to the ground a portly folio volume. She knew it well. It was Ephraim Tigg's cheque-book. How many times had she seen and gloated over it! No longitudinal pamphlet of singles cheques sufficed for the extended banking transactions of the Rasper. There were at least twenty on each page of the folio volume. Mrs. Armytage looked upon them, and, in her mind's eye, filled up the blanks between the graven forms with sums and with signatures. But the writing she pictured to herself all seemed to be in red ink. Some two or three cheques had already been cut from the page that lay open before her. The cheques were on white paper; the cuttings on the page looked by no means conspicuous. Would the abstraction of one, one little cheque only, be missed? No longer twenty thousand minor fiends amog her curls, but the very Devil himself cried, "Take it, woman! be bold, and take it!"

A sharp penknife lay invitingly near, when just the tiniest creak in the world of the kitchen door alarmed her. It had been left half open. She looked up, and saw Ephraim Tigg of Stockwell, the Rasper, through the aperture, leaning on his two crutch-sticks and watching her.

She caught his eye at once, and he hobbled in. "Aha!" he said cunningly, "we have been travelling on Tom Tiddler's ground I see. Pretty travelling, isn't it?"

She was confused, and dropped her veil, and yet in her inmost heart was as thankful as one so fallen as she was could be, that for once she had not obeyed the promptings of that Impulse of hers. Ephraim Tigg swept in

a moment the table with his hungry eye. He saw that nothing was missing: nor gem nor cheque.

There was one loose draught, however, and that he had brought with him. It was similar in form to those in his book. It was much crumpled, as though it had passed through many hands. Was there not a big black word branded or stamped across its face—a word that began with F? The draft was for two hundred pounds, and bore in the usual place of signature his own name, Ephraim Tigg, or something very like it, appended thereto. With never a word he handed it to Mrs. Armytage, who, in equal silence, tore the document into minute fragments, and thrust them into her portemonnaie. She made the usurer a low curtsy, laughed her little silver laugh, and was her own old charming self again.

"Quitte pour cette fois," she murmured between her shining teeth; "but it has cost me a hundred pounds."

The Rasper let her go, and when her skirts had ceased to rustle in his hearing, sate down, and nursed one of his bandaged legs.

"Not this time, but the next," he said, with a cunning smile. "Not this time, but the next she surely will. The bird must be caught: the pretty little song-bird must be caged and fed on Old Bailey grunsel."

Mrs. Armytage was unusually grave and meditative until the brougham had brought her to the Middlesex side of Westminster Bridge. She leant her cheek on her hand, and through her clustering curls looked wistfully at the passing crowds who sped about their several concernments, pure and honest ones mainly, it is to

be hoped, not errands of sin and death. She passed a girls' charity-school, and wondered to see how white the children's caps and pinnars and sleeves were; how smooth and rosy their faces. "I could do without diamonds if I were a charity-girl," she thought. At the corner of the New Cut there was, as usual, the great flaunting ragged crowd reeking of fried fish and vitriol. "Is there any one among those wretches wickeder or more miserable than I am?" Mrs. Armytage asked herself. It was late in the May afternoon, the sun danced on the river, which the cloudless sky made blue against its will, hiding all the mud and the corruption beneath. She saw the myriad panes in the Parliament House all twinkling in golden sparkles; the sharp crocketed pinnacles piercing the clear azure; the long purple shadow that the great tower cast upon the flood. She brightened up herself now, perhaps in compliment to the House of Lords and Commons, and by the time her brougham had entered Birdcage Walk was quite radiant, and had bowed, smiled, shaken her ringlets, and waved her finger-tips to at least a score of fashionable acquaintances.

She was still a bird of passage, and had no house in London; but for the present was staying not in an hotel, but in grand furnished lodgings close to Albert Gate, Knightsbridge. She dismissed the brougham at the door, and bade the driver go to the stables and tell them to send round the horses. In a quarter of an hour or so came a mounted groom, with a cockade in his hat,—had not her late husband military rank?—leading her own saddle-horse, an exquisitely-formed and satin-skinned chesnut. And forth came Mrs. Armytage, in the most graceful of riding-habits and

the tightest-fitting of riding trousers, and a little Spanish hat with a white feather swaling in it. The Spanish hat was an novelty in 1851. The great Sombrero and pork-pie revolution had not yet taken place. Reine, her faithful chamber-maid, had dressed her. "She is perfect," Reine exclaimed, as she stood at the door, and in unfeigned admiration saw her mistress assisted into her saddle:—she scarcely seemed to touch the outstretched palm of the groom—and giving her horse a light touch of the whip on the flank, caused him to curvet and paw his way up the street.

"Yes," soliloquised Mademoiselle Reine, "she is perfect. She can do the *haute école* to a marvel. She would be a treasure at Franconi's. *Elle y ira un jour, peut-être.* She is not a bad mistress, and never looks to see what there is between the pear and the cheese. *Mais, quelle drôlesse!*" And Mademoiselle Reine, shrugging her shoulders, shut the door.

Mrs. Armytage passed some hundreds of acquaintances in the park. Amazons and cavaliers in the ride; guardsmen and dandies lounging at the rails. She patronised them all. She puzzled the men; she was the *femme libre*, but allowed no liberties. No one could say anything against her, and yet everybody had an innate conviction that she did not belong to the category of the immaculate. The Southbank, who was in great force in the Park that afternoon, hated Mrs. Armytage even worse than she did Miss Salusbury. "She's neither flesh nor fowl nor good red-herring," was the disparaging remark of the plain spoken Southbank. The more cynical among the dandies said, that

when she had a fixed residence in town, her house was one where you played at being well-behaved, and made believe to be proper. But everybody liked Mrs. Armytage's little dinners and card-parties, her dry Sil-lery, her sparkling Burgundy, and her conversation.

As she cantered homewards, she caught sight of Captain William Goldthorpe, leaning over the rails. He was as splendid as the sartor, sutor, shirt-maker, and jeweller's art could make him; but his moustache hung down, his eyelids drooped, and he looked on the whole a very dejected dragoon indeed. She reined in her horse, and looked at him long and earnestly.

"Poor Willy Goldthorpe," she said, "to be so young and good-looking, and to have so rich a papa, and yet to be in such dreadful difficulties."

The dragoon recognised her, and raised his hat.

"Just like his own fair curls," thought the widow. "Yes, Willy is very like Hugh. Poor Hugh!"

And so she rode through Albert Gate.

CHAPTER XV.

Quis Custodiet ipsos Custodes?

THEY had brought him away from Hoogendracht, and made a *garde-chiourme*—a keeper of gaol-birds—of him. He was not master of his own actions. He was in the hands of Fate; and Fate, through the intermediary of the Maritime Prefect of the department of the Bouches-du-Scampre, had brought him to Bel-leriport-upon-the-Sea, and made a gaoler of him.

The place was not one that was much coveted, although it entailed the wearing of a military uniform, even by people ordinarily so hungry for office, and so

fond of wearing uniform as are the French. An old soldier is glad enough to get a place as a game-keeper or a *garde-champêtre*, or to slumber and snarl in the porter's lodge in some public establishment. He will not object to a place in the custom-house, or at the Octroi barriers in Paris. He will accept even at a pinch the appointment of *porte-clefs* or guardian in a Parisian prison, or in a *maison centrale*. But he shuns the *chiourme*. An ineffaceable infamy attaches to all that is connected with the galleys. The *gardes-chiourme* are looked upon as cousins-german to the hangman. Although the convicts have been transferred to dry land, and (ten years since) were lodged in the Belleriport barracks, instead of being chained to the oar in monstrous bi-remes and tri-remes; the duties of their task-masters were still analogous to those which they fulfilled in the days when the galley-master walked backwards and forwards, from stem to stern, along the plank between the lines of rowers, and, with threats and execrations, let fall his lash on the shoulders of the slaves who faltered at the oar.

The gendarmes are accustomed to handle malefactors; but they shrink from the *chiourme*. They conduct the convicts to its gates, and give them over to the keepers, but there their office ends. Were they to accept the detestable functions attached to the place itself, their yellow belts would be tarnished, their moustaches would wax limp, and their jack-boots dull; and the glory of their cocked hats would be diminished. For there is no greater error than to suppose that a gendarme occupies a humiliatingly inferior position in the military hierarchy of France. The gendarmerie is a *serviee d'élite*. No rude boys dare deride the tall

man in the cocked hat as they do the humble "Bobby" in England. They fear and respect him, nay, even admire his imposing dress and resplendent accoutrements. He is favoured by the municipal authorities, and frequently deferred to,—not ordered hither and thither like a dog or an English policeman. I have heard a private in this force called "Monsieur le gendarme" by a shopkeeper.

So he had been brought from the peaceful Flemish convent,—from innocent labours, from the calm abode where, if the evil passions of men were not absolutely extinguished, they were latent and subdued—to this Aceldama of Southern France, and put in authority over thieves and murderers. Out of a gang of twenty toiling at their slavish drudgery, the comrade who was to initiate him into his duty could point out fourteen who had taken the life of a man.

His duties were not many, and not difficult to learn. He was to be a common *garde-chiourme*. The commissary of the Bagne—the governor of this Tartarus—read the minister's *placet*, and a sealed letter of recommendation from the office of the Maritime Prefect. He asked him nothing about his antecedents. Any stick is considered good enough to beat a dog with, and at Belleriport any man whose hand was strong enough to hold the stick was looked upon as qualified to wield it. The commissary asked him if he could read and write. He answered, Yes, and by command read a passage or two from the framed rules and regulations of the place hanging on the wall. He wrote, from dictation, an extract from the penal code of the Bagne, inflicting ten years' imprisonment with hard labour on any *garde-chiourme* convicted of

having favoured the escape of a convict. The commissary glanced at his handwriting, and remarked to a subordinate, "He can spell." His name, François Vireloque,—it was so on his passport, and was as good as any other for such a nameless wretch as he,—his age, his height, were entered in a huge book. He was told to sign a certain declaration, promising obedience and fidelity, and he did so.

"There is nothing else that I can do for you," said the commissary, closing the great book. "We ask questions neither from our sheep nor our shepherds. All those we want to know are answered in writing. You will be given over to a *planton*, who will show you your duty, and I should counsel you to attend to it. After four days' looking about you, it will be time enough to go to work. *Allez, mon garçon*. You look strong and muscular enough to make a charming *garde-chiourme*, although I suppose you were pretty well tired of the world before you entered into this dog's life."

The commissary threw himself back into his arm-chair, and blew his nose in a depreciatory manner. Even he despised his subordinates. He forgot to despise himself; for, you see, that is a lack of memory not very uncommon; and, besides, there is something in possessing power, well-nigh as absolute as that of an Oriental pasha, over two thousand five hundred men, even though they happen to be the greatest rascals in creation. The Maritime Prefect was ostensibly the commissary's superior; but he had a perfect horror of the Bagne, seldom ventured within its precincts, and was very loth to interfere by word or deed with the scoundrelism it contained. "There is pitch

enough in my ships," observed the prefect, "without my soiling my hands with those miscreants." So he kept grand state at the Hotel of the Prefecture, and approved all the reports and memoranda of the commissary. This functionary was himself a very good-natured person, with a profound disgust for the place and the people among whom he was doomed to pass his life. He had once been a commissary of police in Paris,—in the brilliant Quartier de l'Opera, in fact—but breaking down in not discovering one of the innumerable conspiracies of Louis Philippe's reign, had been very nearly losing his situation, when a friend, who was *chef de bureau* in the department of marine, recommended him for the vacant post of commissary of the Bagne at Belleriport. "'Tis an easy place, my friend," he said. "'Tis as easy as being a schoolmaster. Now there are schoolmasters and schoolmasters. If one has to teach intelligent children whose parents expect them to make progress, the calling has its difficulties and its responsibilities; but if one has only to teach incorrigible blockheads, whom no one expects to learn anything, the life becomes easy. You have nothing to do but punish." The commissary in difficulties accepted the situation, and held it satisfactorily. He was now in his tenth year of service. When the pious ecclesiastic who was almoner of the Bagne talked to him of reclaiming any of the outcasts under his charge, he made answer, "There is nothing about reclaiming prisoners in the government instructions; but there is a great deal touching upon double irons, the 'grande fatigue,' and the bastinado. Reclaim your penitents as much as ever you like, my dear abbé, only let them not shirk their work. It is

with me they will have to deal if they do." The commissary had a pretty faded little wife, who had been an actress at the Opéra Comique. When she was in a good temper, she made him nice dishes, and they talked of the dear old days of masked balls, and dinners at the Café Anglais, and when on the morrow of the carnival disorderly *débardeurs* and *titis* used to be brought before him in their masquerade costume. When she was cross and had the *migraine*, he would come down into the Bagne and lead the convicts a terrible life. His lady called the two thousand five hundred prisoners "*ces gueux*." The commissary allowed himself two hours' absence every evening, which he spent at the principal café in the town of Belleriport. The town commissary, the brigadier of gendarmerie, and some of the inferior *employés* of the prefecture would smoke, and take their *dimi-tasse*, and play draughts with him; but the general public avoided the terrible commissary of the Bagne. *Il sentait la ehiourme*—"he smelt of the hulks," they said. At home, in addition to the conversation of Madame, he cultivated jonquils, and played dismal overtures on the violoncello. A weary life this, but the commissary bore it, for his pay was four times larger than he would have received in an ordinary capacity elsewhere. He had his tenderness, his weak point, this stern commissaire. He had a pretty little daughter, Amanda, fourteen years of age, at school, in the convent of the Sacred Heart in Paris; and every franc of his savings helped to swell the fund which was one day to culminate in Amanda's wedding portion. *Elle sera dotée par le Bagne*—"the hulks shall give her a dowry," the commissary was wont gleefully to exclaim. But little Amanda had

never been within fifty leagues of that abhorred Belle-riport.

François Vireloque, the newly-appointed gaol-guard, was duly handed over to the *planton* or guide. This man's name was a mystery. The commissary knew it of course; but he never mentioned it himself, and seemed profoundly indifferent about having a name at all. His comrades called him "Le Camus," the "Snub," from the conformation of his nose. Even the commissary became accustomed to address him by this not very complimentary epithet. Le Camus seemed to care nothing about his nose, and went about his business tranquilly. He was an old hand at convict keeping, and had been at Belleriport twenty years. Previously, he admitted to have been a *garde* at Toulon, at Rochfort, and at Brest. "I like it," said Le Camus. "I am a philosopher, and there is quite enough to make me contented with my lot in the fact that I have to drive convicts about, instead of being one myself." He was a man of ancient and venerable appearance, with snowy hair, a rosy cheek, and a mild blue eye. These gifts of nature did not, however, prevent the *Sieur le Camus* from being an unconscionable old villain, with a hard heart and a cruel hand, and with an insatiable penchant for anisette.

"You are welcome, my friend, to Belleriport," he chuckled, as he led the new-comer to the storehouse, where he was to be supplied with his uniform. "We want new blood down here terribly. The commissary is a mere jackass, and the majority of our comrades have their brains in the soles of their boots. You will not enjoy much of the esteem of society at large,"—

Le Camus habitually spoke in the inflated style common to the half-educated Frenchmen;—"there is a prejudice, a most unjust prejudice, against the profession of *garde-chiourme*; but you will know how to make yourself respected among these gentlemen. There is one of them. You will make him respect you. Tchaoup!" And, with this curious interjection, he raised the thin cane or *badine* which with the rest of his fellows he bore as a symbol of authority, and brought it down with all his strength—which, his age notwithstanding, was by no means contemptible—across the shoulders of a wretched creature in coarse drab vestments, and with a red woollen nightcap on his shaven head, who had been gaping and staring at the stranger; while his companion, another forlorn specimen of humanity, in similar attire, and to whom he was attached by strong leg-shackles, was busily polishing a cannon-ball with sand. He sat to this work, like a stone-breaker, with his legs wide apart, and his work-mate had to stoop a little. There was a pile of balls on either side of him, one rusty and the other polished.

It did not appear that the convict standing up had been guilty of any offence beyond gaping and staring. Le Camus merely struck him with his cane because he was fond of hitting people who dared not hit him again. The poor creature took his stripe as a matter of course, uttering a short, sharp yell, writhing his shoulders, and looking a curse at her tormentor. The polisher of cannon-balls looked up with a grin, as though he thought it an exceedingly lucky thing to have escaped this stroke of practical humour on the part of the *garde-chiourme*; and a sailor-marine stand-

ing sentry—not over the convicts, but over the government storehouse—close by remarked in gruff approval, “*Il l’a attrappé: c’est très bien.*”

“The only way to get on with these brute beasts, comrade,” the *Sieur le Camus* said, by way of explanation, as they entered the storehouse.

François Vireloque was speedily provided with his uniform, and with the kit and accoutrements allotted to a *garde-chiourme*. The dress was exceedingly hideous, and the convict element struggled with the military for predominance in it. A coarse greatcoat of blue drab, with red cuffs, collars, and epaulettes, grey trousers with a red stripe, thick boots, over which came clumsy white gaiters, a *bonnet de police* with a red worsted tassel, and a pipe-clayed sword-belt, from which hung a short heavy sabre, and his equipment was complete. Then they gave him a dark lantern, a pair of pocket-pistols, a pair of handcuffs, an iron *bâillon* or gag, and a *livret* or pamphlet containing the rules and regulations for the life of a *garde-chiourme*.

He reported himself before the commissary, was inspected, approved, and dismissed. The *planton* took him in hand again, and the remainder of that day, with the whole of the next, was devoted to exploring every nook and cranny of the great Bagne of Belleriport. He saw the convicts’ dormitories, their solitary cells, their work-rooms for wet weather, their hospital, and their graveyard. As the *garde-chiourme* was destined to remain long enough in Belleriport to become acquainted with all the features and peculiarities of his abode, it is not expedient at present to anticipate matters by describing any of these apartments in detail. By-and-by, you may know all about them, and why

the *garde-chiourme* was sent thither, and why he had ceased to be a Lay Brother, and who and what he was, and whether he had ever worn the cassock of a clergyman, or the scarlet and gold-lace of a soldier, instead of the friar's duffle-frock or the convict-keeper's belt and *bonnet de police*.

When every part of the barrack had been visited, they entered a boat, manned by convicts, with a *garde-chiourme* as coxswain, who moved the tiller with one hand, and plied his cane with the other, and crossed a sheet of water to the immense dockyard and arsenal of Belleriport. There the Lay Brother saw the convicts at work in gangs of hundreds together, always linked two and two. They were sawing blocks of stone, piling timber, dragging huge tumbrils full of stone and gravel, hauling weights up, and otherwise performing the duties of beasts of burden. And among them continually circulated the *gardes-chiourme*, calling them abusive names, and bringing down their lithe canes on their backs.

"At Brest," observed Le Camus, "we are not permitted to use our *badines*. At Belleriport a system more sage prevails. Tchaoup!" he cried again, flicking but not absolutely striking with his cane a tall and athletic convict, who with his mate was trundling a wheelbarrow full of sand up a plank, somewhat too lazily as the officer thought.

"Hands off!" cried the convict fiercely, and in the English tongue; but he took care not to return the insult, and kept a firm grip upon the wheelbarrow, as if fearful of giving liberty to his hands.

"It is well," sneered Le Camus, "it is well, Mr. John Bull. I dare say your words were mutinous

enough, but you are too artful to get yourself into trouble. After all," he whispered to François Vireloque, "I was not quite *en règle* in touching him; the fellow was doing nothing that immediately called for punishment, and might have reported me to the sergeant, and so on to the commissary, for cruelty. To be sure, I might have said that he was skulking: and a *garde-chiourme's* word is always taken before a convict's. Look at the fellow. What a robust scoundrel he is! Are they all like him, I wonder, those Englishmen? When he came here first he had magnificent auburn hair, moustache, and beard. He is just your build—not to offend you by the comparison; and, upon my word, compère Vireloque, you have somewhat of an English look."

"I have been in England," answered the *garde-chiourme* slowly, "many, many years ago. I have seen many Englishmen like him yonder with the wheelbarrow. How sunburnt he is!"

"Yes, one might imagine that he had passed half his life in the Indies. But it is nothing, after all, but our southern sun. It soon tans the fairest convict, and if that doesn't tan him, the bastinado will. Here he is, coming down the plank."

The athletic Englishman, with his chain-fellow, came down with the empty wheelbarrow. The chain-fellow could not have been of much assistance to him in his work. He was a diminutive and almost deformed negro—an old negro, too, who had dreadful white eyebrows seaming his black face, and with his red woollen nightcap wanted only a tricoloured cockade to look like a monstrous caricature of Toussaint L'Ouverture. He also had grinned and shown his teeth

when the *garde-chiourme* had wantonly insulted him who shared his misery. The convicts of Belleriport were strictly practical believers in the philosophy of La Rochefoucault, and always found something to rejoice over in the misfortunes of their best friends.

The Englishman gazed with some interest at the new *garde-chiourme*, muttered something to himself in English, and then something to his yoke-fellow in French. Anon he was called away to some fresh task.

"What is he here for?" asked François Vireloque.

"Do you mean the negro?" returned Le Camus.

"*Meurtre*. Killing a cattle-dealer of Poissy. He got off the major sentence for *assassiant*. He didn't shoot or stab his man with a knife, but bit his nose off, tore one of his eyes nearly from the socket, and then knelt upon and strangled him. There being no lethal weapon used, the jury found him guilty with 'extenuating circumstances,' and he only had *travaux forcés à vie*. He is a lifer. Don't you see his double irons. If he misconducts himself, he has triple ones; and as he can't walk with them, is obliged to lie on the floor of a cell."

"I don't mean the negro. I mean the other."

"Oh, the Englishman. He's a lifer too. Burglary and attempt to murder too; that's his little affair. It took hard swearing, though, to convict him. He very nearly proved an *alibi*. Was at a railway-station, his counsel protested, when he was said to have been at Chaillot. All the eloquence of M. le Procureur Impérial had to be employed to drum a persuasion of his guilt into the heads of the jury. They are so stupid, those juries."

"At Chaillot, did you say?"

"Yes, at Chaillot. It was necessary to prove that he had been at Chaillot; though of course M. le Procureur Impérial could have proved him to have been anywhere he pleased. A very clever man M. le Procureur Impérial."

"Is he quiet?"

"Yes; *il est assez bon diable*. He has not yet been punished, although he frequently suffers for the sins of his black friend; for when the negro has triple irons for three days or so, our Englishman has to sit or stand by his side: and when the blacka-moor gets the bastinado, which is his pleasant fate about once a month, his comrade has to stand by and look on."

"Horrible!"

"Horrible! Ah, you are but young to the business. You'll soon get all that nonsense out of your head, after you've seen a few more horrible things."

"Is he always chained to that black demon?"

"Always! Death alone can unrivet his manacles. You see, our lambs are never uncoupled save when one dies, or is sentenced to death for killing his brother convict."

"They kill each other, then?"

"Occasionally. *C'est une petite distraction*; it relieves the monotony of their existence."

"Do they never kill their jailers?"

"Jailers! Oh, you mean us? Bah, it is not a pretty word, jailer! Well, sometimes they murder a *garde-chiourme* who is fool enough to be looking the wrong way, but that is his own fault. And now, my friend," Le Camus continued, "I think we have seen everything that is to be seen in the dockyard and the

Bagne to boot. Two of our little institutions you have not witnessed, the infliction of the bastinado and of the guillotine. But you will have time enough to assist at both these ceremonies. We don't trouble the *exécuteur des hautes œuvres* of the department when we have a capital case. *La chiourme* keeps a guillotine on its own premises."

They took boat again, and went back to the Bagne. That evening Le Camus was on leave, and he took François Vireloque to a wretched *cabaret* just outside the dockyard gates, and frequented exclusively by *gardes-chiourme*. Here le Sieur le Camus submitted to be treated to several glasses of absinthe, and became convivially conversational.

"You had better enjoy yourself to-night," he said, "for to-morrow you will have to study your *livret* of duties, and will be examined upon them by M. le Commissaire. Burn M. le Commissaire! I hate him. Yes; I will have yet another pipe and another absinthe. You are a silent fellow, but you are generous. How like an Englishman you are!"

"I am an Alsatian. I come from Strasbourg," answered François Vireloque.

"Ah, that's half a German, and a German's half an Englishman. By the way, I forgot to tell you that our friend who is chained to the negro always stoutly protests his innocence. M. le Commissaire even says that he has doubts about his case. I remember once, when that wretched black was in trouble, and the Englishman had to keep him company in his cell, that it was my duty to take them their victuals. The negro was sleeping in his triple irons, the lazy old rascal, and I had some talk with the Englishman. He is not

generally very communicative, but that evening I got him to loosen his tongue. I remember well the finish of his conversation. '*Garde-chiourme*,' he said, almost solemnly, 'I am the victim of an infernal plot. I am here through the wickedness and the treachery of a she-demon with yellow ringlets, who has been my Evil Genius through life.' What on earth is the matter with you, Brother Vireloque?" he exclaimed, suddenly stopping in his discourse.

The Lay Brother, the *garde-chiourme*, had buried his face in his hands, and, his head prone to the *cabaret-table*, was sobbing violently.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mrs. Cæsar Donkin.

As a freeborn Englishman, of full age, unconvicted of any offence, and with means amply sufficient to defray any costs of charges, you might be desirous, I assume, to obtain board and lodging in a genteel family where, at a moderate outlay, all the comforts, luxuries, and refinements of life were offered. Turning over the supplement of a great daily journal, a well-worded advertisement informed you as to the place where that board and lodging with its concomitants might be obtained. Mrs. Cæsar Donkin was a lady of much experience in advertising, and was generally fortunate enough to secure a left-hand top-corner. To see herself there on a fine Monday morning in the boarding and lodging season was, next to affixing a receipt to a bill for a month's hospitality, her chief delight. To ladies and gentlemen seeking a truly English home her doors stood widely open. You were to apply,

by letter only, post-paid, to Omicron, care of Mr. Try-fell, pastrycook, Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace, Ticonderago Square. The highest references were offered and required; and as regards the first, a letter to Omicron very speedily brought about an interview with Mrs. Cæsar Donkin, who referred you to the pastrycook, to several neighbouring tradesmen, to a benefited clergyman of the Established Church residing in the immediate neighbourhood of the Giant's Causeway, Ireland, and to herself. To look at Mrs. Cæsar Donkin was generally found sufficient. You made up your mind and boarded, or didn't board, after five minutes' parley. As to your own references, a month's payment in advance was held by Mrs. Cæsar Donkin to be far more conclusive of a candidate's respectability than any number of testimonials from peers of the realm, members of Parliament, or dignitaries of the Church. But there was a proviso, there was a saving clause,—there was one little requirement which the hostess of 15, Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace, expected you to fulfil; and if you were unable to do so, a gentleman might just as well hope to occupy a front parlour furnished in Buckingham Palace, with partial board from the royal kitchen, and Phipps the Ineffable to officiate as a boy in buttons, as to become an inmate of Mrs. Cæsar Donkin's boarding-house. She received no gentleman under sixty years of age. Above that age, she gave ample scope and verge enough,—she would have welcomed Methuselah with affable gladness,—but sixty was her minimum. Her rule was inflexible. The laws of the Medes and Persians might have been summed up in her advertisement. She never departed from its terms. Read it.

BOARD AND RESIDENCE.—In the immediate vicinity of Kensington Gardens, the Marble Arch, Madame Tussaud's Exhibition, and within an easy distance of Kensal-Green Cemetery, and other fashionable places of amusement, all the comforts of home and the luxuries of refined life are offered, by a lady moving in the first circles, to ladies and gentlemen of means and position. The highest references given and required. Address, by letter only, post-paid, to 'Omicron,' care of Mr. Tryfell, pastry-cook, Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace, Ticonderago Square. N. B. No gentleman under sixty need apply.

The sting of the announcement was in this caudal postscript. You might be as rich as Cræsus, but unless you were sixty Mrs. Cæsar Donkin would have nothing to say to you. Once, and once only, she had relaxed her rule, and had consented to receive a battered East Indian reputed to be enormously rich, and who would only own to fifty-nine. Mr. Jaghire stayed many months. He went away one morning to Malvern to drink the waters. He didn't come back. After the lapse of about a year, he wrote to Mrs. Cæsar Donkin, professedly from some unpronounceable place in Hindostan, whither he had proceeded, he said, in the hope of repairing his fortune, which had been grievously injured by disastrous speculations in indigo. He entreated her to take the greatest care of a very old and ragged shawl dressing-gown, and of a hubblebubble pipe much damaged, which, with a file of the *Bengal Hurkaru*, and a slack-baked cat called Ginger, were the only chattels he had left at Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace. The slack-baked cat he requested Mrs. Donkin to accept as a present. He talked of making her speedy remittances,—of sending her draughts at sight, jars of chutnee, kincobs, uncut gems, all the wealth of the Indies, for aught that appeared,—but he regretted that at present, owing to "the infamous conduct of his agents," he was

unable to send anything. Stay: he sent his compliments, and had the honour to inform Mrs. Cæsar Donkin that he was forty-five next birthday.

The dismal falling-off of this depraved Anglo-Indian—it was years before the mutiny, but he *must* have been Nana Sahib in disguise—was a heavy blow to Mrs. Cæsar Donkin; but the perfidy of Jaghire taught her wisdom, and thenceforth she took care that none of the male sex but sexagenarians entered her doors. When a gentleman called on Mrs. Donkin, she took stock of him narrowly. Five minutes' inspection generally sufficed to enable her to come to a decision. She could see through paint and padding and bracing-up and buckling-in. No form of wiggery was unfamiliar to her. She asked for no certificate of baptism. She said to herself, "This gentleman is either over or under sixty," and accepted or rejected him accordingly. After the Jaghire catastrophe she was never known to err. The loss she sustained was in some sense salutary to her; and all her sexagenarian guests declared that, since that "Indian fellow" went away, her monthly bills always contained items for which she had never thought of charging before. There was no disputing those bills; they were, like her laws, unalterable. If an old gentleman grumbled, Mrs. Cæsar Donkin curtsied, and requested him to provide himself with another domicile by that day month. In most cases the old gentleman was senile enough to cry, and beg pardon, and was re-admitted to the privilege of paying about three guineas a week for his board and lodging; but he never grumbled again.

Mrs. Cæsar Donkin had an enemy, Mrs. Grabble-cheese, of Great Aboukir Street, a rival lodging-house

keeper. Mrs. Grabblecheese used to call the establishment in Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace "the hospital," "the paralytic asylum," "the refuge for the destitute," "Crutchstick Castle," and the like opprobrious names. Mrs. Cæsar Donkin laughed her bitter laugh, and asked how it was that Mrs. Grabblecheese could only get commercial clerks, half-pay lieutenants, and decayed old maids as boarders; why she didn't pay the butcher, baker, candlestick-maker, and so forth; and what she had done with the money of that *poor deceived* Miss Gumm, whom she had taken into partnership, and with whom she had, after some six months, quarrelled, even to the unseemly extent of public litigation? In the Paddington County Court the cross actions of Grabblecheese *versus* Gumm (disputed right of property in a Pembroke table and a volume of Blair's Sermons), and Gumm *versus* Grabblecheese (money lent), are yet reckoned among the *causes célèbres* of the district. The quondam partners were very nearly going up to the Common Pleas, each with her several plaint of assault and battery. That Gumm had torn off Grabblecheese's false front the milkman and the newspaper boy could testify; but, then, were not 'Liza the housemaid, and Stampell the postman, ready to swear that Grabblecheese had knocked out one of Gumm's false teeth with her matronly and by no means feeble fist, in the very passage of the house in Great Aboukir Street? How Mrs. Cæsar Donkin gloated over the feuds of her foewomen! "*I never go to law,*" she said, with a toss of her head. The legal gentlemen who fomented the quarrels between Gumm and Grabblecheese earnestly wished that she would. "*I pay my bills,*" Mrs. Donkin proudly declared. It was certain that Mrs. Grab-

blecheese didn't; and when Miss Gumm's money, which wasn't much, was spent, the firm oscillated for a considerable period between Great Aboukir Street and Portugal Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was, indeed, notoriously insolvent; and Mrs. G.'s only defence was, that if she paid nobody, nobody, on the other hand, paid her. "*My* husband doesn't drink," Mrs. Donkin used to say. Mr. Grabblecheese, it is useless to conceal, *did* drink. He was a dissolute corn-chandler; that is to say, he professed to have once dealt in cereals on commission, but he had come to a very draffy and husky stage, and imbibed continuously. He was not unfrequently laid up in lavender, or in tobacco and malt-liquor rather, in Whitecross Street; and his periodical appearance before the Commissioner made much mirth among the tipstaves and the attorneys' clerks. "The low wretches," Mrs. Cæsar Donkin used to say, with a supreme curl of her lip, when she alluded to the entire Grabblecheese interest and connection.

The male Donkin, her husband, was a musician. He was professional, and played every night during the season in the orchestra of the Surrey Theatre. In the summer months he went to the sea-side, or to some suburban music-hall; at all events, he was not visible from July to September. His instrument was the violin; he dressed in rusty black; his demeanour was placid, and his nose was red. If he did not drink, his next neighbour must decidedly have been an ardent votary of Bacchus, and he, Donkin, have caught the convivial infection. He never mingled with the domestic concerns of Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace. He came home very late, and breakfasted in the kitchen, and departed quietly and unostentatiously, as he came.

The Grabblecheeses declared that the area-steps were his ordinary channel of ingress and egress. He was the meekest and mildest of fiddlers, and had a smooth, shining, old, bald head, which the boys in the Surrey Gallery at Easter time, and on Boxing-night, used to find an irresistible target whereat to aim nutshells and orange-peel. He bore all with equanimity. He would have endured even a ginger-beer bottle, and smiled under concussion of the brain. "Where's the use," he would say to his comrade who played the flageolet, when advised to resent scornful epithets of "catgut," and when insultingly desired to "strike up,"—"where's the use? I'm a disappointed man." The old gentlemen boarders who by chance met him about Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace merely saw in him a shabby elderly man with a blue bag. There might be boots in the bag, or law-papers, anything. Few suspected the fiddle; and only from the occasional presence of a lump of rosin on the mantelpiece of Mrs. Cæsar Donkin's sanctum, and a stray strand of horsehair floating about, could you have inferred anything as to the vocation of her husband.

The dinner-hour in Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace was seven o'clock, and at about thirty minutes before that hour, and on a fine evening in the latter part of May, Mrs. Cæsar Donkin sate in the sanctum before named busily occupied in arranging the dessert for the coming banquet. She always gave her guests dessert. It helped them on with their wine. She liked them to dine late. They lunched at their clubs or abroad,—not but what she had a midday refection of the genteelest description,—and a late dinner made them less hungry than thirsty. She liked the old boys to be thirsty, and to have plenty

of wine, and of the very best, from their own wine-merchants. Tithe and toll Mrs. Donkin might indeed have taken on the decanters of the ancient boarders, but she would have scorned to adulterate or to dilute their potations; nay, when their own stores were temporarily exhausted, she was glad to supply them with wines and liqueurs of the very best vintages, for which she did not forget to charge a handsome price. "No Cape sherry, no logwood port, no British brandy for me," was Mrs. Cæsar Donkin's maxim. She sent for the finest wines with which Mr. Harrington Parker, of Pall Mall, could furnish her, and was quite contented with a profit not exceeding seventy-five per cent.

"My gentlemen like port," she said; "it warms the cockles of their old hearts. Once get 'em over their wine, and they don't want to go out; do they, Puffin?"

Words similar to these rose to Mrs. Cæsar Donkin's lips on the very afternoon of which I am speaking. The young person addressed as Puffin meekly acquiesced, as it was her practice to acquiesce in everything that everybody said. Miss Puffin was an incarnate affirmative. It would be inappropriate to call her an animated one, for she was the stillest and quietest of woman-kind. There had never been any animation about her; it wasn't in her.

Mrs. Donkin's sanctum was a kind of polygonal excrescence which had been partly robbed from the kitchen-stairs, and partly from the back-parlour, and incommoded the entrance to both. There had, it is presumable, once been a window to it, which had been bricked up and papered over in the days of the window-

tax; but a sunken tracery of its outline was still visible, throwing the impossible dragons and abnormal flower-baskets in the wall-paper violently out of perspective. To compensate its disappearance, a hole had been knocked in the ceiling, and a skylight fitted, through which slippery vantage-ground the ill-omened cat Ginger frequently looked down with baleful eyes on the confabulations of Mrs. Donkin and Miss Puffin. The mistress of the house had a strange leaning to this animal, sole relic of the faithless Jaghire; for the shawl dressing-gown, the hubblebubble, and the *Bengal Hurkaru*, had long since gone the way of all rubbish. Ginger was repulsive in aspect, profligate and felonious in disposition; yet still Mrs. Cæsar leaned towards him, sometimes with affection, sometimes with a hearth-broom. He was a cynical cat, and from long acquaintance with every missile that could be propelled against his ribs and head, had grown callous. When he was not on the skylight, he sat habitually among the fragments of bottle-glass in the roughcast on the wall of the back yard. Now and then he caught a sparrow whose senses had become stupefied by the London smoke, and had so become weak upon the wing, and then, having eaten him, Ginger rejoiced over the wing in a manner horrible to behold.

The polygonal sanctum was full of cupboards with locks that would have defied Hobbs, to say nothing of the tampering of any evilly-disposed housemaid. It being May, and warm weather, the meagre little fireplace was garnished with a neatly-crumpled supplement of the *Times*, from which, however, the Bergen-op-Zoom advertisement had been carefully cut. Mrs. Donkin had an almost superstitious reverence for these aids to

publicity, looking upon them as things that had cost money and brought money, and were not to be lightly cast away. She kept the scissored fragments in an old volume of *Elegant Extracts*, and designed to make an album of them some day.

On the mantelshelf reposed the male Donkin's lump of rosin, and a couple of pit orders for the theatre, the which, judiciously distributed, were found to be very serviceable in inducing tradespeople of a gay turn of mind to send in articles of first-rate quality at reduced prices. The rosin was flanked on either side by two little weasened black profile portraits in the sticking-plaster style of art, one representing Mr. Cæsar Donkin in an enormous coat-collar and an aggressively protuberant shirt-frill, the other, Mrs. Cæsar Donkin in leg-of-mutton sleeves and a hat like a cart wheel placed horizontally. The gum had long since become desiccated, and portions of the heads and busts of the personages represented curled away from the fly-blown Bristol board. Little triangles of glass stuck in the corners of the warped frames. The bronzing with which the high lights had been relieved had become discoloured, and dotted Mr. Donkin's whiskers and Mrs. Donkin's hat-ribbons with a tarnished fluff, giving them the appearance of rusted Ethiopians. A little inscription in pencil beneath each portrait told the spectator that they were executed on the Chain Pier, Brighton, in July, 1829. Had there ever been a time, I wonder, when Mrs. Cæsar Donkin cared less about Mammon than about matrimony? Perhaps. On the wall fronting the fireplace there hung another little portrait, a worn-out, mangy miniature, the carnations all faded, and one eye smeared out, on a bulging

scrap of ivory. It was the picture of an unhealthy, inane-looking child in a frock and frills,—a mournful little object, who seemed to be weakly lisping, “I always had the rickets, and died of water on the brain, if you please.” Such, it may be, was the end of young Cæsar Donkin, if there ever had been a Cæsar Donkin who was young, and wore a frock and frills, and had his miniature taken.

The dessert on the table—it was one of the order called by upholsterers “occasional,” and a French furniture dealer would decidedly have put it down as a *meuble d’occasion*—was not such a display as Mr. Duffield or Miss Mutrie would have longed to have painted. It was mainly of the dry and gritty description. There were some argillaceous-looking biscuits; several pippins, whose bruised countenances gave them the appearance of fighting pippins, and of having been in the Ring, and heavily grassed in a contest with the Blustering Railer; some apparently petrified plums; a few dropsical oranges, suggesting boiled or blown-out integuments and woolly interiors; a plateful of almonds and raisins, very dried up and shrivelled; and some squabby flattened figs. This, with a seed-cake, presenting a curious model of different geological strata, completed the dessert. There was seldom any need to renew it. The old gentlemen who sat at Mrs. Donkin’s table were in general toothless; and as for the ladies, they had more reasons for pleasing the landlady than the landlady had for pleasing them, and so Mrs. Donkin did not study them much. Now and then the old gentlemen were generous, and on birthdays and the like brought home choice pears and strawberries, nay, grapes and pines even, from Covent Garden. Mrs. Donkin did not in

the least object, and the improved dessert made a gala-day for herself, the ladies, and Puffin.

A word may be spared for a glance at the two ladies I have mentioned by name. With Mrs. Donkin's age I have nothing to do; it would be ungallant to make inquiry into it; but taking her appearance for all in all, it is much to be feared that if Mrs. Donkin had lived in the reign of Elizabeth or James I., she would have been summarily sent to the stake, or at least dragged through a series of horseponds as a witch. The very sight of her would have set Mr. Hopkins itching to tie her thumbs together, and her facial *ensemble* would have been irresistible to the Reverend Cotton Mather. We know how many perfectly innocent and virtuous, albeit hideous, old ladies were unjustly burnt alive in the days of witchcraft persecution; and, remembering this, the ill-favouredness of Mrs. Donkin's appearance should not have militated against the presumption that she was in all respects a most estimable personage. Granting that she wore on her head a faded silken mutch, or hood, or calash, or something very much resembling the head-gear of the ladies who met on the blasted heath what time Macbeth was made Thane of Cawdor; granting that from beneath this headdress there hung elf-locks of grizzled and dishevelled hair; granting that Mrs. Cæsar Donkin's countenance was, in the way of wrinkles and crow's-feet, a chart of defiance to Mr. Wyld and all other eminent geographers; granting that on her upper lip and dented chin some sparse and bristly hairs of undefinable hue asserted themselves: granting that two discoloured fangs made an unpleasantly prominent appearance when she opened her withered lips; granting

that what little of her neck was visible presented a remarkable series of gnarled corrugations; granting that her shoulders were very high, her back very round, and her hands long, lean, and garnished with orange-tawny nails that approached the form of claws;—granting all these peculiarities, it would be manifestly unjust to attach the stigma of sorcery to a lady who doubtless possessed every quality of head and heart necessary to endear her to her own sex and to the community at large.

That implacable Mrs. Grabblecheese boldly insinuated and resolutely maintained that Mrs. Cæsar Donkin never washed. Well, supposing that she never did? We can be virtuous without soap, I presume. Some of the holiest hermits of antiquity were quite unacquainted with the use of the flesh-brush and the foot-bath. If Mrs. Cæsar Donkin was averse from lavatory exertion, her boarders had never to complain of a deficiency of towels or brown Windsor. Everything in her house, herself always excepted, was as clean as a new pin. The furniture and metal work were as bright as the sun, and she was one of the spots on it.

The captious complained of her attire; surely she had a right to wear what clothes she liked. Her garments were of silk, although they certainly had seen their best, and perhaps their worst, days; for, short of absolute tatters, they had reached the superlative degree of shabbiness. From Mrs. Cæsar Donkin's girdle there hung a bunch of keys, which gave her a pleasant *chatelaine* look, compounded of a cellaress in a nunnery and a female warder in the House of Correction. She wore, too, an apron, conjectured, from its colour and texture, to have belonged to Mr. Cæsar Donkin in

his early days of snuff-taking, and to have served him as a pocket-handkerchief. When to this you add very roomy list slippers, and a very remarkable brooch set in silver, and the stone of which was very like a petrified whelk, Mrs. Cæsar Donkin stands, or rather sits, before you in that unadorned beauty which is said to be adorned the most.

Respecting her companion, Miss Puffin, there is no need to enter into such minuteness of detail. Everybody felt and said that Puffin was nobody. Mrs. Cæsar Donkin told her so at least five hundred times a-day, and the worthy body seemed perfectly contented to be regarded as a nullity. She was a very placable little woman, with hair that had seemingly been carefully boiled until all the colour had been expressed from it, and with a complexion that had also undergone an analogous process of stewing down. If Puffin never smiled, it may be for the reason that her teeth were uneven, or that she had nothing to laugh at. If she seldom looked you in the face, it was perhaps because her eyes were very weak, and the lids thereof given to inflammation. If her hands were so very thin and bluely transparent, incessant hard work may have been the cause; and if, to sum up her personality, her poor little *barége* frock was dismally frayed and faded, it may be accounted for by the fact that it was very nearly the only dress which Puffin had to wear.

Being Nobody did not prevent people occasionally asking, in a lazy kind of way, how she came to be nobody and nothing. A few surmises respecting her were hazarded, but they involved no interest, and were seldom carried out to investigation. Some said she had been a partner of Mrs. Cæsar Donkin, and had

been cozened out of her share in the business; others that she had been a boarder with a small annuity which had ceased, and being destitute, was now dependent on Mrs. Cæsar Donkin's bounty, and did what household work she could to assist her, for her keep. Then there was a party who said that she was a bankrupt day-school keeper hiding from her creditors. Another risked the conjecture that she was Mrs. Donkin's sister, niece, daughter even; but the most generally received opinion was, that Miss Puffin had been a domestic servant, elevated from the kitchen to the parlour, and admitted to the full confidence of the lady of the house, and intrusted with all her secrets, because "she knew something about her," and could do her an injury if she chose. Don't for one moment imagine that one ten-thousandth part of the charity which exists in London is to be found in the dinner and asylum announcements that appear every day in the newspapers. Puffin was about thirty years of age, and was, it need not be said, "a maiden all forlorn," at whom there is too much reason to fear that "the man all tattered and torn" of the nursery rhyme, albeit excited by the morn-crowing of an early village cock, and an offer from a "priest all shaven and shorn" to perform the marriage service gratuitously, would have turned up his nose.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Sexagenarians.

THE preparation of a dessert is no such very momentous matter, particularly when there are no strawberries to pick, and no grapes to prune with silver scissors or dress with vine-leaves. Mrs. Cæsar Donkin, however, considered the daily occasion as one of great importance, and, with the assistance of Puffin, went through it with a considerable amount of state and ceremony. The half-hour before dinner was her time for descanting on the virtues and the failings of her boarders, for comparing the experience of the past with the occurrences of the present, and for devising those crafty little additions to her monthly bills which redounded so greatly to the credit of her ingenuity, and were by no means unserviceable in swelling her monthly profits.

"But as for General Tibby, Puffin," Mrs. Cæsar remarked, twisting a raisin which was obviously past service from its stalk, "he must go."

Puffin, who was polishing a pippin, did not verbally respond to this observation; but she gave utterance to a plaintive bleat, which may have been either a negative or an affirmative, or nothing at all, as the case stood.

"You mean that you think he ought to go," pursued Mrs. Donkin, quite satisfied as it seemed with the reply. "I can stand him and his carryings-on no longer. The nasty, mean, old hunks! I wish he'd never come here, that I'm sure I do."

This time Miss Puffin spake: "He's very old," she timidly ventured to remark.

"Old!" repeated the boarding-house keeper; "he's as old as the hills. He's one of the screws out of Noah's ark, and as rusty. What's the good of his being old and half-silly, if he's got nothing besides his half-pay and an annuity which dies with him?"

Miss Puffin winced at the mention of an annuity. It recalled, perhaps, unpleasant reminiscences.

"His half-pay," Mrs. Donkin continued, in a true philanthropic spirit, "he can't help. Not that he ever fought for it, I should imagine. He never went further than Wormwood Scrubbs, you may be sure. But it's his annuity that drives me wild with him. A man who would sink his savings in an annuity, and give up some comfortable thousands in a lump for a paltry six hundred a-year, would poison his grandmother."

"Ah, that he would!" acquiesced Miss Puffin, who would have agreed with Mrs. Donkin if she had accused General Tibby of a design to blow up the Houses of Parliament or set the Thames on fire.

"The man pays punctually enough," Mrs. Donkin was just enough to admit. "But where's the use of his money, if he's got nothing to leave? He might make his will on the back of a postage-stamp, and his handsomest legacy would be the silver buckle to his stock, his old wig, or his shower-bath. Stop; he's got a rouge-pot, too, and a hare's-foot. I'm sick and tired of him, Puffin. He gives himself all the airs of a bashaw of three tails. He grumbles at everything. He tastes the milk at breakfast before it goes into his tea, and talks of adulteration. He smells his bread, and says he's sure there are ground bones in it. He finds

out my extras and scratches them out. He never offers anybody a glass of wine, though he drinks shamefully: and, worse than all, he takes my gentlemen out at night, and keeps them till two o'clock in the morning at his nasty clubs, smoking and guzzling, I'll be bound. He's half-ruined that poor Mr. Fogo, who was never anything more than a cotton-broker at Liverpool, but always wishes to pass himself off as a military man."

From the tenor of Mrs. Donkin's remarks it may be reasonably inferred that General Tibby was by no means a favourite with that lady. Previous to the discovery of the annuity, indeed, he had held a high place in her estimation. Although convicted of the heinous offence of having sunk his capital, he might have continued on the footing of an ordinary boarder; but his most upardonable crime was the seduction into dissipated ways of the ex-cotton-broker, Fogo, who was very wealthy and had *not* invested his property in an annuity.

"Give Tibby warning," was the sententious advice proffered by Miss Puffin, when her companion had come to the end of her complaints.

"I must and will," replied Mrs. Cæsar, "though it's a hard matter to lose something very like two hundred a year. But I can't stand him, Puffin, and that's the truth. He ought to be charged a pound a week for his cough, and another pound for the stupid nonsense he talks, and thirty shillings for the trouble he gives the servants for his baths, and his I don't-know-what's, and then he ought to be hung for an old skin-flint."

"He's a wretch," Miss Puffin agreed, pensively musing over the plate of figs.

"Ah," retorted Mrs. Donkin, with some asperity,

"it's all very well for you to call him a wretch; and yet I've heard you flattering the old nuisance up to his very eyes. You shan't sit next to him any more, Puffin."

"I won't," returned Miss P., with perfect equanimity.

"Why don't you try your sheep's eyes upon Mr. Chatwynd," Mrs. Donkin resumed, "or upon Mr. Maunder, or on Captain O'Ballygrumble, or on Mr. Tiddydoll, or on that dear, good, kind old creature the Governor?"

It may have been intended as a compliment to speak of Miss Puffin's orbs of vision having any resemblance to sheep's eyes. It would have been nearer the mark to have likened them to those of a lamb sorely afflicted with ophthalmia. To the patient Puffin, however, all epithets were equally indifferent. She was the kind of woman whom you could have called a griffin or a hippopotamus without in the least disturbing her tranquillity.

"Poor old Governor!" she said softly.

"Poor old Governor! Rich old Governor, you mean. At all events, if he isn't rich, his daughter must be rolling in money. I believe that if the old gentleman could eat gold, she'd let him have it. She's always bringing him something. She's always making him presents. She turns the servants' heads with half-crowns and new caps. She's promised me a gold watch from Benson's on her papa's next birthday. Such a lady as she is too! such horses and carriages, such diamonds and pearls, and such a dear little duck of a Blenheim spaniel!"

"I don't like her," Miss Puffin remarked quietly.

"That's because you're jealous of her, you mean-spirited thing. You hate her because she's pretty, and has plenty of money, and hasn't a face like a sick rabbit with pink eyes."

Miss Puffin just raised those same ill-spoken-of eyes to about a level with the scraggy neck of the old woman.

"She's very kind to her father," she returned, "and does her best to make the Governor happy; apart from that, I think—I don't know why, but I'm sure of it—that Mrs. Armytage is a very wicked woman. Her very laugh makes one shudder."

This was an exceedingly long speech for the ordinarily taciturn Puffin, and she was quite confused with her loquacity; so, plunging into silence she proceeded to carry the plates, two by two, from the room. At this stage, it wanting but ten minutes to dinner-time, it was Mrs. Cæsar Donkin's invariable custom to remark that she must really go and make herself tidy. The memory of Puffin ran not to the contrary regarding this remark; and Mrs. Donkin used duly to disappear to some mysterious chamber in the upper stories which served as her sleeping apartment. When she reappeared, her hands were invested with a pair of curiously brown and ragged mittens, in which the fissures of age struggled with the original interstices of the network; and those who were permitted to approach Mrs. Donkin could not avoid an impression, palpable to the olfactory sense, that the completion of her toilette had been in some way assisted by the consumption, either by herself or by her twin-sister, of some alcoholic preparation into which the cordial known as peppermint had entered.

Miss Puffin took the dessert to the dining-room by easy stages, and had just landed the figs on the side-board when a double knock of alarming length and resonance echoed through the house.

For the matter of that, all the boarders knocked loud; some whose hands were stiff or chalkstony plied the knocker somewhat tremulously and in uncertain cadence; but all the sexagenarians did their best to produce sonorous rat-tats. Their strength was in the main but labour and sorrow now; and there was some feeble pleasure to be derived even from the power of knocking a good loud series of reverberations. The ring which passed through the lion's head on the door was good to them, and thundered on its little anvil bravely. Mrs. Cæsar Donkin let them knock as vigorously as they could and chose to do. It was an indulgence for which she forbore to charge in the monthly bills.

The double knock, or rather the personage whose advent it announced, was duly ushered upstairs; and a few moments afterwards a succession of double knocks more or less resounding was heard, as the old gentlemen came from their clubs, their trots in the Park, and the other amusements they devised for killing their old enemy Time. He it was that most of all they had to fear. Like a usurer who begins to have doubts of the solvency of a spendthrift deep in his books, he exacted heavier and heavier interest for every year of life he granted them; yet the poor old moths could not help wasting the brief span that remained to them, and puzzled their wits to get rid of the precious moments that Time in his tolerance permitted them still to enjoy.

Let the venue be changed to the dining-room, an intensely respectable and gloomy apartment of the

family-vault order of architecture, the windows of which commanded an extensive view of the premises of a statuary opposite, whose front garden was decorated in a lively manner with cenotaphs, broken columns, monumental tablets, garden vases, the Venus of Milo, the bald-faced stag, the Discobolus, the dog of Alcibiades, the late Mr. Wilberforce, and the late Duke of Wellington. There was the usual sarcophagus wine-cooler under the side-board of the dining-room; a cheerful bust of a Grecian philosopher with his nose broken off; and a water-colour view of a building that might have been either a union workhouse, a baths and wash-houses, or a baronial hall, and which seemed to have been borrowed from the fine-arts' gallery of a house-agent.

A bell that was suggestive of mingled reminiscences of a sexton's tolling for the departing and of the proximity of muffins had been tinkling for some five minutes to warn the inmates of Mrs. Cæsar Donkin's establishment that dinner was served; and at a few minutes after seven the old boys came shambling and tottering down the staircase from the drawing-room, each with a lady on his arm.

I have called them for conciseness the Sexagenarians, but it has already been pointed out that while Mrs. Cæsar insisted on a minimum, she totally ignored the maximum in age. Some of the gentlemen present had passed their seventh, some were rapidly approaching their eighth lustre. Old General Tibby, it was clear, would never see seventy-three again. This hero of a hundred field-days was immensely decrepit and fatuous, and as sprightly as his manifold infirmities would allow him to be. He was elaborately got up, and there was

nothing true about him but his voice, which, as all the paint and padding in the world will not mend flaws in the vocal organ, was cracked and shrill, as beseemed his advanced age. Mr. Fogo was not so old by half a score of years, and wore much better. Something of the Lancastrian muscle—of the thew and sinew of the strong men who hail from the backbone of England, and bulk large, so to speak, in the forefront of English humanity—yet adhered to him. It has already been hinted that this retired and affluent cotton-broker had a fancy for being mistaken for a military gentleman. It would have been indeed a very great mistake to assume that he was one; for "*bourgeois*" was written in every line of his healthy vacuous countenance; but, as Mr. Fogo was over six feet high, and had sufficiently broad shoulders, and did not stoop much, he took to wearing a black stock, without any perceptible shirt collar, a blue surtout tightly buttoned up to his throat, and a stripe down either leg of his trowsers. He affected high heels to his boots likewise, carried a bamboo-cane in one hand, and dangled a stout buckskin glove in the other. He subscribed to the *Army List*, knew all the military clubs by sight, frequently hovered on their door-steps when there was the slightest shadow of a pretence to ask for one of the members, and would have dearly liked to belong to either of the United Service re-unions, could he have got any one to propose and second him. Before coming to Mrs. Donkin's he had occupied apartments in that great half-pay Patmos St. Alban's Place, Haymarket; but the red-jackets and crossing-sweepers soon found out that he was no soldier. When they called him "captain" it was ironically, and when they touched their ragged

caps to him, it was with a sneer. In the end he fled the purlieus of the camp in disgust; but on levee-days he was still to be found haunting the avenues to St. James's and the Horse Guards. He knew all the promotions and appointments in the *Gazette*; he was familiar with the facings, services, and motto of every regiment in the service; he was glib in the use of abstruse terms relative to fortifications and military tactics; and he was an adept at the configuration of a plan of the battle of Waterloo, on the mahogany after dinner:—the positions of the French and allied armies being marked out by means of nut-crackers, bits of orange peel, and thin streaks of port-wine. Beyond this he was perfectly harmless, and paid his way like a gentleman.

There were altogether eight old men who partook of the dignified hospitality of Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace. Tibby and Fogo you have been already introduced to. Captain O'Ballygrumble's energies—he was seventy—were mainly confined to the endeavour to conceal the fact that he was an Irishman. When it is mentioned that his appearance was as Hibernian as his name, and that his speech was of the purest Dublin jackeen just racked through a cask of Cork whisky, it is unnecessary to add that his attempt did not succeed. He was called captain—or called himself so—from having formerly held a commission in a militia regiment. He was a ladies' man, but of the ferocious, not the sentimental order. He bragged much of having blown out the brains of many brothers who objected to the attentions he had paid to their sisters. When a divorce case in high life became a topic of conversation, he was used to wink significantly, and to hint that he could say a

great deal more about that "litttle matther" if he chose. He pleaded guilty to the charge of ogling the ladies in Kensington Gardens. The truth is, that he glared at them horribly, brushed past them offensively, and addressed them impertinently, whenever he had an opportunity; and his dyed whiskers and large white teeth were the terror of well-disposed nursery-maids and young ladies' boarding schools. It was whispered that he had been tried in early life for the abduction of an heiress; and it was known that he had made an offer of marriage to Lady Madapolam, widow of the great City alderman Sir Callimanco Madapolam, who had over two hundred thousand pounds to her jointure. His suit was scornfully rejected; but, nothing deterred, O'Ballygrumble followed the lady about from watering-place to watering-place,—from Brighton to Cheltenham, from Nice to Aix-la-Chapelle,—pursuing her with his odious attentions. The lady had been foolish enough to send a few curt replies to the oceans of love-letters with which he inundated her; and his last *coup* was to threaten to publish all the correspondence that had passed between them. After this, it was said that Lady Madapolam—whose servants, male and female, he had alternately cajoled and caned into his interest—had bought her persecutor off with a handsome annual allowance. The good lady didn't require a second husband. She spent her dividends very comfortably in eating and drinking, in pills and potions,—she was known to every *Pharmacien Anglais* from the Seine to the Danube; in forming a library of theological literature; in subscribing to charitable associations for recondite philanthropic purposes, and which generally, after the third annual dinner, ended by the secretary's abscond-

ing, and the whole affair turning out to be a gross swindle and imposition. The respected name of Lady Madapolam headed the subscription to the Infant Hottentot's Gratuitous Hockey-Stick and Tip-cat Distribution Society, in connection with the Additional Knife and Fork and Digestive Pill Aid to Destitute Cannibals Association. Friendly George Gafferer was in the last-named bubble. George was Sec. *pro tem.*, and laid the foundations of many future dinner-invitations among his private friends by distributing gratuitous tickets among them for the first grand festival at the Freemasons' Tavern. The Gafferer was great while the society lasted. He was wont to boast of his "interest with the Press," and absolutely procured the insertion of a ten-line paragraph in the *Weekly Cad* newspaper, in which the pressing claims of the destitute cannibals, more especially in the Fee-jee and Cruel Islands, to a large supply of knives, forks, and Cockle's pills were dwelt upon. "Shall these embryo Christians," asked the paragraph ("embryo" was a good term, and told immensely), "die of indigestion? Missionaries are well known to be tough. Who would refuse the poor cannibal his knife, his fork, and his pill-box?" O'Howler wrote the above glowing lines, and lived at free quarters on the charity for a month afterwards. Friendly George Gafferer constituted himself into a committee of taste, and delivered some opinions most valuable in an epicurean point of view, when asked into the bar-parlour of the Freemasons', and regaled, free of expense, with turtle-soup for lunch, peculiar Madeira, and choice Regalias. A good soul George Gafferer, and nobody's friend but his own.

But Captain O'Ballygrumble has been left in the

lurch while I have been digressing upon George Gaffer. (The Additional Aid Society turned out to be an awful delusion; and it was with difficulty that the Treasurer and Sec. *pro tem.* escaped legal proceedings.) The Captain was *en retraite* now, and lived gaily enough upon his property, whencesoever it may have proceeded. He said that he bore Lady Madapolam no malice; but that he had been "skyandalously threatened throughout the affair, and that she would have done much better to marry a Milesian gentleman of ancient descent, than to spend thousands in building churches where they were not wanted." Such was the Captain. He would have been very much like the bragging and fortune-hunting Irishman so familiar to us on the stage, had he not been the very image of the bragging and fortune-hunting Irishman we see off the stage and in real life.

Mr. Chatwynd was very old, thin, silent, gentlemanly, and inoffensive. He was known to be rich, to be a member of the Society of Antiquaries, and of the Travellers' Club. Second-hand booksellers and dealers in mediæval wares were continually sending him catalogues by post. He had chambers in Staple Inn, Holborn, where he was supposed to possess a magnificent collection of pictures, busts, gems, China, and rare editions. Beyond a habit of taking snuff at dinner time, and an abhorrence of fat meat, he had no very remarkable peculiarities.

The rest of the old men, with one exception, claim no special notice. They were nonentities. They wheezed and grumbled, they coughed and cooned, they hemmed and hawed, and occasionally drivelled. They were frightened at the ferocity of Captain O'Bally-

grumble, and awed by the quiet contempt of Mr. Chatwynd, who, for all his ripe age, was erect and valid, and was known to be a person of superior attainments. Their conversation was the very baldest chat. Take away their clothes, and chains and rings, their well-spread table, and soft couches, and there was not much to choose between these ancients and the frieze-clad dotards you see warming their wafer-like palms over the stoves in the old man's ward of a workhouse. It was not good to look upon them, either when they were solitary, and doddered about in blank search of their health and their memory, or when meat had warmed them into active munching and slavering, or drink had made them garrulous. Poor old men, where were they all going? There was nothing about them to remind him who considered them of those reverend hermits of old, who dwelt in caves and fed on roots, and prayed continually. They were all self-indulgent, and, most of them, sordidly avaricious. The coarse dirty old woman who ruled over the house rather frightened than persuaded them out of their money. A greedy old man needs often to be terrified with stripes as though he were a greedy schoolboy; and not one of Mrs. Donkin's boarders could stand the lashings of her tongue. For the rest, they were the kind of dilapidated gentlemen you see wandering about Pall Mall and the Opera Colonnade on warm afternoons; who leer into the milliners' shops in the Burlington Arcade, and the pastrycook's at the Regent Circus, and sometimes totter through the Pantheon Bazaar to the conservatory, where the macaws and cockatoos scream at them. And more than one of Mrs. Cæsar Donkin's boarders were, it is to be feared, very wicked

old boys indeed. But "the Governor"? Who was he? what was he like? and how came he by the gubernatorial title? you may ask. The Governor was the oldest inmate of the caravanserai in Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace. Indeed, he was an old, old man, and venerable to look upon. His silky, snowy locks flowed down his shoulders; his linen was scrupulously clean and white; and through his great infirmities, he was permitted by Mrs. Donkin to appear at the dinner-table in his dressing gown and slippers. When he spoke, his speech was gentle, courteous, and dignified; but he was, perforce, not very talkative for he was almost entirely deaf; and his reverend head was garnished with a pair of ear-trumpets, secured by elastic bands round his white forehead, and which in their convolutions reminded one of a ram of the highest respectability and the greatest antiquity. He was so feeble that when his daughter was not present to assist him he had to be wheeled in and out of the dining-room in an arm-chair, and he was propped up by pillows during the repast. He rose very late, breakfasted in his room, and retired to rest very early. He was continually visited by eminent physicians. A most handsome stipend was paid for his lodging and maintenance; Mrs. Cæsar Donkin was devoted to him; and even the undemonstrative Puffin showed how much she was interested in him. Often the Governor would say, in his refined and dignified manner, that, but "for his great age and infirmities, nothing would afford him greater gratification than to offer his hand to a virtuous and well-conducted young woman, who could bring herself to cheer the winter of an old man's days." At this the sensitive Puffin would tremble, and grow pale

and red by turns; and then, mustering up courage, she would shout into one of the ear-trumpets, that he had plenty more years before him, and that Dr. Sardonix's good care would speedily restore him to health and strength. At which the Governor would shake his head with an expression of resigned negation.

Yes: Dr. Sardonix attended the Governor. He talked everywhere of his patience under suffering, his amiable disposition, and his distinguished manners. A true gentleman, the doctor declared him to be, and one of the old school. He extolled the filial devotion of the Governor's daughter to the skies. "It is true," the doctor would say, "that the brilliant position which Mrs. Armytage fills in society frequently calls her abroad: but no sooner does she arrive in England, than she flies, literally flies, my dear sir,—to the side of her venerated parent. Ah, what a daughter! what a model for all daughters, high and low!"

"I am glad there is some good in that artful and designing creature," Miss Magdalen Hill once chose to remark when the name of the detested widow was mentioned and her filial piety eulogised.

"Artful and designing!" the doctor echoed, holding up his white hands in well-simulated astonishment. "Come, come, let us not be too hard upon this most charming of butterflies,—this most seductive of gilded moths."

"Say serpents, doctor," poor Lady Goldthorpe chimed in. "She's a nasty hypocritical rattlesnake. I never could a-bear the creature, with her fly-by-night curls. I wish they were false; but they ain't, I know, and more's the pity. I tell you she's no good. Years ago, when my poor dear dead darling Hugh came

back from India on his leave, and stopped in Paris, that woman tried to wind him round her finger. I found one of her yellow curls in his cigar-case once —”

“Mamma!” Magdalen expostulated, with a warning finger, a blush, and a sigh.

“You may call her anything you like, dear ladies,” the discreet physician would remark; “but what would you have? She is a woman of the world. She occupies the exceptional and invidious place of a rich and pretty—well, not pretty, but engaging—widow. She belongs to Vanity Fair, dear Lady Goldthorpe. Surely you remember the charming character of Becky Sharpe.”

“No,” the simple lady replied; “I never read no novels. I had a maid called Becky Sharpe once, and she ran away with three bottles of eau-de-cologne, a true lover’s knot brooch, and all the silver stoppers off the bottles in my dressing-case, let alone a pair of laced sleeves and a false character she left behind her. Her name turned out to be—when Sir Jasper transported her,—not Sharpe at all, but Bowdler.”

“I,” Magdalen said, rising at this stage of the colloquy, “have read the wonderful drama of human life to which Dr. Sardonix refers. Unless I am mistaken, Becky Sharpe was in the end found out. It may be that the same fate will happen, some day or another, to this pattern and paragon of filial piety, whose name I disdain to recall.”

It is said that when people are talking about us our ears burn. I wonder which one it is, the right or the left, that tingles and feels hot when people are talking against us. It is well that the little widow had

curls; for giving one ear to the men, and appropriating another to the women, what flaming lobes Mrs. Armytage must have had from morning till night underneath those shining locks of hers!

Had she known, or did she divine half the evil that was spoken against her, she would not have deviated from the path of duty she had traced out for herself regarding her papa. Her behaviour towards him was more than amiable, more than admirable: it was incomparable. Mrs. Cæsar Donkin looked upon her as the ancients might have looked upon the Grecian daughter, or the Sansculottes of the Reign of Terror upon the young lady who drank a glass of blood to save her father from the scaffold. Puffin, to be sure, disparaged her; but then Puffin had her motives. Perhaps Magdalen had her motives also, but she was too haughty to own them. The chest of that young person's thoughts closed with a spring, the key was lost, and the thoughts mouldered into skeletons within.

The Governor took the homage and the affection of which he was the object with his unvarying and dignified serenity. He was good enough to express to Mrs. Donkin his belief that in the whole world there was not such another daughter to be found as his Florence; beyond that admission he suffered himself to be loved *se laissait aimer*, and repaid the almost idolatory which was lavished on him with beaming smiles, of which he had, to all appearance, an inexhaustible stock. It was doubtful why he was called "the Governor," what he had governed, or where had been the seat of his government. He was too fine a gentleman to be asked impertinent questions, even if

he had not been too deaf to answer them. He had had something to do with the colonies—with the West India Islands, it was generally understood. A chance reference to Tobago had once been dropped by his daughter. Was he the original.

“Old man of Tobago,
Who lived on rice, sugar, and sago,
Till the doctor one day
Unto him did say,
To a roast leg of mutton you may go?”

No one could give an opinion with certainty as to this important question. It was, however, generally agreed that he was not only wealthy himself but the cause of wealth in others; to wit, in his daughter, whom he had splendidly dowered, and who was the widow besides of an Indian officer of large means. Mrs. Donkin had lost her faith in affluent Orientals. The remembrance of the perfidy of Jaghire was a wound not yet healed; but even she did not refuse to place credence in the many lacs of repees left to his relict by Major Armytage.

It must appear to the reader that while these personal matters were under discussion the ancient boarders of Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace have been kept waiting an unconscionably long time for their dinners; and they were crusty old gentlemen, believe me, who resented even a three minutes' delay in the appearance of the soup. Be not alarmed, however; while we have been wandering from the Governor to the Goldthorpes, and from Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace to Onyx Square,—there was not a mile distance between the boarding-house and the palace of Mammon,—Mrs. Cæsar Donkin's *pensionnaires* have been proceeding with their

repast as well as ever their teeth and their trembling hands would let them. They have had soup; they have had fish—brill, falsely called turbot, at the top, skate at the bottom; they have had *entrées*—Pshaw! why should I give you the entire bill of fare? It is enough to say that the entire banquet was a capital imitation of a first-rate dinner, but that it was in reality a very bad one. There was plenty of electro-plate about, *épergnes* filled with artificial flowers, chased vases for the champagne—which, out of compliment to the ladies, was provided in turns by the old gentlemen,—filigree bread-baskets, finger-glasses, table-napkins, a battered old waiter full of weak rose-water, passed round after the cheese,—all the paraphernalia, in fact, of an expensive and well-served feast. All that was wanting were good meats and vegetables. Herein lay the profit of Mrs. Cæsar Donkin, and herein was displayed her ingenuity and state-craft. The rose-water didn't cost a farthing a day, the electro-plate wore well, the artificial flowers were in perennial bloom, the table-napkins were washed, like every article of linen in the establishment, by the dozen, and surely finger-glasses are cheap enough! Altogether, however, these odds-and-ends of good society made a brave show. It was the style that did it, Mrs. Donkin said; and even those who came away hungry from her symposia admitted that she certainly did give very stylish dinners. With a judicious and discriminating use of style, you may do almost everything in this sublunary world. In letters you may conceal your ignorance and your dullness,—in art you may atone for imperfect drawing and clumsy manipulation,—in the concerns of domestic life you

may hide half your meannesses and shabbiness, by artful recourse to style. For it is an impalpable powder which, when dexterously thrown in the eyes of mankind, affects them with a happy blindness.

There: the clattering of knives and forks is over. A remarkable cheese, very much like a dilapidated drum, and coming, it is to be suspected, from North Wiltshire, but which Mrs. Cæsar Donkin's stylishness caused to do duty as a Stilton, has been removed. The grand cut-glass stand, with three lamentable forked sprigs of celery drooping from it, and the little pellet of butter, with its elaborate knife of electro ware, have been handed round; the cloth has been drawn, as the reporters write of public dinners; the famous dessert has been put on the table; the decanters of port or claret belonging to each boarder, and each labelled with his name, have been produced from the recesses of the sideboard; and the Sexagenarians begin to enjoy themselves. They are but a feeble folk, and scant of that breath from a total want of which they must all, at no very distant period, perish. *Cras nobis*, my hearty companions;—and the conversation is rather by fits and starts than sustained; but there is a little squabble now and then, and perhaps a weak morsel of love-making; and these relieve the monotony of the chatter.

Love-making? Yes, madam; and that reminds the narrator of a serious error of omission. It is customary, I am aware, at public banquets to make the toast of "the ladies" one of, if not *the* very last of, the evening. There is surely no need in private life to be so ungallant; so with the first glass of wine, if you please, let us look towards the ladies, and evince

a due solicitude for their very good health. I bow towards the end of the table where sits Mrs. Cæsar Donkin, looking more like a witch than ever. Beyond the mittens, Mrs. Donkin scorned to make any alteration in her toilette, even on the most festive occasions. The Sexagenarians feared her too much to remonstrate. Miss Puffin, indeed, spruced herself up to the extent of putting on over her faded *barège* a black silk jacket, which in a strong light showed reflections of an orange tawney hue, and which was currently reported to have been made out of a hatband presented to her grandfather on the occasion of his attending the obsequies of the late lamented Marquis of Granby. But Mrs. Cæsar Donkin and Miss Puffin were not the only members of their charming sex who graced the dinner-table. There were lady boarders in Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace. For example, on the left of General Tibby—the post of his right being occupied by Puffin—sat old Mrs. Vanderpant, widow of a former consul at the port of Bristol of his majesty the king of the Netherlands. She was very fat, she was very good-tempered. From whatever part of Holland she came, it could not have been from the clean village of Brock, near Amsterdam; for she did not show the slightest distaste to Mrs. Cæsar Donkin's slatternliness. Mrs. Vanderpant had a comfortable pension paid to her quarterly by a Dutch house in the cheese and butter trade in Trinity Square, and in which her deceased husband had held a share. She walked resolutely every Sunday morning to the old Dutch church in Austin Friars, returning in a cab, and always having a terrific dispute with the driver on the question of sixpence. First she refused to pay him; then she

offered him some of the minor coinage of the Low Countries, which she kept by her in a wash-leather bag; then she abused him roundly in Dutch; finally, she paid him, slammed the door in his face, drank two glasses of cherry-brandy, informed any one who might be present that all cabmen were "tam tieves," and went to bed until dinner-time. There was little variety in her life; but beyond an ugly word (imperfectly pronounced, which may have divested it of some of its sinfulness) there was no harm in Mrs. Vanderpant.

Captain O'Ballygrumble, who was croupier,—Mr. Cæsar Donkin never putting in an appearance at meal-times,—had for right hand neighbour a countrywoman of his own, Miss MacShandrydan (of the Shandrydans of Booterstown); while his attentions to the left were due to Miss Bubb. Alethea MacShandrydan was fifty, and an invalid. She suffered from chronic sickness. Not love-sickness; there was but one person in the world for whom Miss MacShandrydan cared one potato-peeling, and that was herself. Not bodily sickness; she was as strong as a grenadier, and had as fine an appetite as the celebrated bold dragoon, "with his long sword, saddle, bridle, O," of the ballad. She was simply sick, and nearly sick to death with affectation. She had shone many years before in a kind of meteoric gleam of the reflex of the reflection of the Irish viceregal court. The shadow of one of the Lord-Lieutenant's footmen had once crossed her path, and made her aristocratic for ever. She was Sackville Street at secondhand, a washed-out Westmoreland Street, a faded Phantom of the Phoenix Park. She made you very nearly as sick as she was herself with

her meagre prattle about "the Kyastle" and the "Juke of Richmond's aid-du-cong's." She called a street cab "a floy," and asked people what the inside of an omnibus was like. The old hypocrite! She was the bane and torment of every cad between the Marble Arch and Charing Cross. She was so affected that she could scarcely speak, and, although she had a fine native brogue of her own, lisped, and chewed her silly words, marching as mincingly in her speech as Agag on the earth, and driving irritable people to meditate the hewing of her in pieces, even as it befel Agag.

She had just enough money to pay her expenses in Eergen-op-Zoom Terrace, and to buy portraits of crowned heads and of the higher nobility at the secondhand-print shops. Her bed-chamber was hung round with pale effigies of his late H. R. H. the Duke of Gloucester, George the Fourth in a brown jasey and silk-covered pianoforte legs, the Earl of Liverpool, and the Hetman Platoff. She had a large wardrobe, which Mrs. Donkin greedily coveted, and of which the shawls, dresses, laces, and other woman's frippery, might have made a somewhat handsome appearance at certain Castle levees and theatrical command nights in Dublin early in the century. She always bought the Red-Book of the year before last cheap; and, so far as you could understand her for lisping, was fond of dilating on the claims of her brother Hercules MacShandrydan, "kinconnected with the Governmhent," to the dormant peerage of Derrymacash. Captain O'Ballygrumble hated her with a fierce and implacable loathing, and declared that she had never been anything more than a governess in a day-school at Dunleary, and that Hercules her brother had first been a tithe-proctor,

and next an exciseman, and was now a retired sergeant in the constabulary.

Miss Bubb was of English extraction. She made no secret of the fact of her family being connected with that branch of commerce involving a traffic in grocery. Don't you remember Bubb and Grubb, family tea-dealers, at the Golden Biggin in Oxford Street? It was Bubb who introduced the "Efflorescent Gunpowder at Two and Eleven," by selling which (in four-pound packages) he realised a fortune. Matilda Bubb had in early life made up many parcels; but the sugar of her career was sanded by the treachery of a shopman, who made violent love to her, and actually proposed, but, finding that old Bubb would give nothing down to his daughter, married Miss Pruin of the Golden Caddy, the opposition grocer's directly opposite; and by dint of puffing advertisements, plate-glass, an electro-plated coffee-mill with a working steam-engine, and a vast display of cartoons representing the cultivation and preparation of the fragrant herb as pursued by the natives in the interior of China, succeeded in depriving Bubb and Grubb of nine tenths of their customers. Old Bubb, however, dying, left his only daughter a corpulent independence; and Matilda was scarcely out of her mourning ere she had the gratification of seeing her faithless swain made condignly bankrupt. He fled to Tasmania, without a certificate, and with incipient delirium tremens, and his wife was compelled to take in needlework for a livelihood. Such is very frequently the end of plate-glass windows, electro-plated coffee-mills, and Chinese cartoons.

Miss Bubb was the only boarder in Bergen-op-

Zoom Terrace, who kept a carriage—a roomy old fly of the glass-coach order. She was very soft, impressionable, and, in a melancholy manner, good-humoured. She read sentimental novels from morning to night. She nourished a long and pensive curl of an ashen hue by the side of either wan cheek, and her left eye was a glass one. Poor Miss Bubb!

The two Misses Cherrygo would have been exceedingly annoyed if you had not taken notice of them; but really there was little in their persons or character to call, in this place at least, for extended notice. They were middle-aged twins, who dressed alike, and wore their hair alike, and frequently had their arms round one another's waists. They sang duets together at the piano in the drawing-room. They went shopping together. In fact, they were inseparable. Old Cherrygo, their papa, who had formerly been connected in some manner with the Commissariat, and was said to owe the major part of his handsome competence to successful malversations in bullocks and rum,—to him was attributed the celebrated *mot*, that “for a forlorn hope there’s nothing like fasting,”—had formerly occupied apartments beneath Mrs. Donkin’s roof. He had the egregious folly and baseness to go away and marry a designing creature who kept a fancy repository in Praed Street, Paddington, and who, I am delighted to say, made his married life one continuous series of aggravated assaults on her part. Is not the case of Cherrygo *versus* Cherrygo even now down for trial before Sir Cresswell Cresswell, and is not the wretched old Commissary seeking a judicial separation on the ground of cruelty? When he left Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace, a reprobate and a deceiver,

this elderly outcast formally disinherited his daughters, The lady who kept the fancy repository is said, indeed, to have declared to a confidential charwoman, on the very eve of their bridal, that the daughters of that old fool should never darken her doors. Fortunately the Misses Cherrygo were not destitute. An uncle, who had made a nice little fortune during the great war by buying up sailors' claims to prize-money at a discount of about seventy-five per cent., bequeathed his virtuous savings to his nieces, and they had quite enough to live upon. The Misses Cherrygo passed, then, a quiet and tranquil life, alternately executing elaborate chair-covers in Berlin wool, and abusing the abandoned Commissary their papa. To that same Berlin wool must be ascribed, as a first cause, their alienation from a never fond but still convenient parent. Had they never requested the elder Cherrygo to call at the repository in Praed Street, for the purpose of matching two shades of orange and one of purple, he would probably have never seen Miss Brownmake, the designing person who subsequently became his wife.

These were all the lady boarders. Mrs. Donkin made no stipulation as to their age, and even charged them less for their board than she did the gentlemen. The ladies were useful to her. It was part of Mrs. Donkin's policy so to contrive matters that every Sexagenarian should be in love with at least one, if not two, of her female inmates. Most of them fell into Cupid's trap easily enough. Chatwynd, indeed, was shy and reticent; but he was so quiet, and in every way so desirable a lodger, that his want of susceptibility was overlooked. Captain O'Ballygrumble made love to the ladies all round, when he was in a

good temper, and always excepting Miss Shandrydan; and as for the poor old Governor, it quite suited Mrs. Cæsar Donkin's purpose that all he had to do with love should be in enjoying the worship of his daughter.

She, the daughter, Mrs. Armytage, was the guest this evening. She often came to dine. She liked to sit next to her darling papa. She complimented Mrs. Donkin. She complimented the ladies. She complimented the gentlemen. There was little individual love-making on the days she came, for all the Sexagenarians were wild after Mrs. Armytage, and their homage was centred in her. Curiously the older ladies were not jealous of her. She seemed to be so dazzling, so accomplished, so distinguished, as to belong quite to another world. She could not, it was argued, be setting her cap at any of these poor worn-out, creeping, chattering, dotards. If her aim was wealthy caducity, she might marry a gouty marquis, or a paralytic duke, if she liked. The Governor was good enough to remark one day that his daughter had refused the Russian Ambassador to a foreign Court, who was the owner of half the Ukraine, and half the peasants living thereupon. "But," continued the Governor, "my beloved Florence will never form a fresh alliance so long as her poor old father lives." So the little lady was highly popular in Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace, and was a queen there, as she was everywhere else, save in a certain dingy chamber in Coger's Inn, Strand, and a certain mouldy back kitchen in Badger-lane, Stockwell. Aha! what king, what queen may there be, I wonder, who in some place or another is not reckoned of any more account than a beggar, and, with a crown

on head and sceptre in hand, has not to eat the humblest of humble pie?

The Governor did not stay long over his wine. He drank three glasses of sound old port-wine, of which he always kept an abundant store, and which he or his daughter freely dispensed to the company in general, and to Mrs. Donkin in particular. It was not his custom to join the ladies in the drawing-room. He was too much of an invalid to bear so much fatigue. It was a very beautiful and interesting sight to see his tottering steps directed to the door by his devoted daughter. She always assisted him to his bed-chamber; and the parent and child passed an hour or so in the solace of cheerful and innocent conversation, before the good old Governor retired to rest. He was unusually feeble on this present evening, and leant on his daughter's arm with unusual pressure. All the Sexagenarians rose as the pair took their departure; and even the ferocious O'Ballgrumble rushed to the door, and held it obsequiously open.

"What a charming creature!" mumbled General Tibby.

"A model daughter," sighed Mr. Bowdler.

"A doosed fine woman," remarked Mr. Fogo, in his peremptory military voice.

The ladies joined their little twitterings in the chorus of applause, and, when they reached the drawing-room, proceeded to criticise Mrs. Armytage's jewellery, her lace, her flounces, and her ringlets. There was but one voice heard in disparagement, and that was, oddly, from good-natured Mrs. Vanderpant.

"I not like her laugh, he, he!" the good lady re-

marked, sinking on a sofa; "and, 'pon my word, I tink she paint."

The Governor occupied a large and commodious bed-chamber on the second-floor. He had furnished it himself, and, as this involved no diminution of Mrs. Donkin's usual charges, that lady was quite content to allow him to furnish it in what manner he pleased. It was by no means an uncomfortable apartment, and, to judge from the number of books and papers scattered about, the Governor was a gentleman of studious, if not literary pursuits.

Florence led the old man into this chamber, and, until they had passed the very threshold, he continued to totter, and she to guide his footsteps, looking up in his face meanwhile with an expression of the tenderest solicitude. They were no sooner inside the door, however, and that door was no sooner closed upon them, and carefully locked, than a very remarkable change took place in the demeanour both of Mrs. Florence Armytage and of her venerable papa. She was no longer the Grecian daughter, the modern Mademoiselle de Sombreuil, ready to quaff a glass of blood as though it were one of Chateau Lafitte to redeem the head of her papa from the glaive of the guillotine. She became, with electric rapidity, our own familiar Mrs. Armytage, the fascinating widow, the laughing tenant of the first-floor in the Rue Grande-des-Petites-Maisons—the airy, saucy, *débonnaire* little creature, who was wont to shake her sunny ringlets and play with her lap-dog. Her pathetic veneration for the Governor had all vanished; not an iota was left of her affectionate solicitude. She dropped his arm without the slightest ceremony, and tripping to a large easy-chair, flung

herself on to the cushions, and laughed long and heartily in her old, merry, satirical, desperately-wicked fashion.

But if the change that had occurred in this pattern of filial affection was sudden and astonishing, not less speedy and peculiar was that which came over the respected gentleman who was dignified with the name of Governor. The deformed became all at once transformed, and Mr. Hartley Livingstone, who had entered the room a confirmed valetudinarian, to whom the seldom-erring judgment of Mrs. Donkin would have given at least seventy-seven years, sat down in an arm-chair opposite his daughter, a hale, strong, personable man to all appearance short of fifty years of age. For he had plucked off his flowing white locks; he had cast aside his ram-like ear-trumpets; he had discarded his green shade; he had divested his neck of its thick swathings of linen. His halt, his hobble, and his stoop had all disappeared; and he sat grinning with a remarkably fine set of even white teeth, a pair of gleaming hazel eyes, and a closely-cropped bullet-head of crisp black hair. It was the story of Sixtus the Fifth over again; and the perfidy of Jaghire was repeated, with five hundred per cent. in its audacious deception added.

The first act of this metamorphosed patriarch was to produce from a cheffonier a black bottle and a glass, and to mix himself a comfortably stiff glass of brandy-and-water. He next opened a cigar-case, and, producing a fine havannah, lighted and proceeded to smoke it, with an aspect of cheerful deliberation.

"My medical attendants recommend the use of the aromatic herb tobacco for the poor old Governor," he

remarked, with a coarse laugh, entirely different from his former calmly-dignified manner. "Nobody but the invalid Governor is allowed to smoke in this house; but he pays so well, that the Witch of Endor would allow him to walk on the ceiling, or have a brass band at the window, if it was agreeable to him. He does what he likes, the interesting old sufferer. Ho, ho!"

The man's laugh was inexpressibly repulsive. He seldom spoke without a hard metallic "Ho, ho!" as a refrain. It was his daughter's laugh in its crude and rugose stage;—his was the vocal bronze to her shining silver. He had a habit, too, of speaking of himself in the third person, of flattering himself grossly, and of slapping his large thigh, which by no means enhanced the geniality of his manner.

"He drinks the best and smokes the best, the poor old Governor does," he went on. "Legs and feet, what a start it is!"

"He smokes very strong tobacco and drinks more than is good for him," his daughter—yes, she was his daughter—replied; "and in private life resembles Gallows Dick the bushranger much more than Mr. Hartley Livingstone, sometime Member of Council at St. Kitts, and said to have been Governor of Nevis."

"It wasn't Nevis," broke in the Governor, "it was Tobago. They all say it was Tobago, down-stairs. Ho! ho! and it was at Demerara, not at St. Kitts, that I exercised legislative functions as a member of the Court of Policy. Won't you have a little drop of something that'll do you good, Flo?"

To a third person—if such a third had been present at this interview—there could not have been from the outset the slightest doubt that Mr. Hartley Living-

stone of the West Indies, or Gallows Dick of the bush, or the Governor of Bergen-op-Zoom Terrace, Bayswater, was an undisguised and unmitigated Ruffian. Villain and ruffian, coarse, low, cunning, and unscrupulous, were written in every line of his perfectly healthy face. Withal the man's eyes glistened with an ardent, devouring, almost savage love and admiration for his daughter. Their positions were reversed. He no longer suffered himself to be loved, as at the dinner-table. 'Twas she who endured endearment, and, to do Mrs. Armytage justice, she took all her papa's affection in a philosophical if not a demonstrative spirit.

Just then there came a little knock at the door.

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